DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 262 119 UD 024 448

AUTHOR David, Jane L.; Peterson, Susan M.

TITLE Can Schools Improve Themselves? A Study of School-Based Improvement Programs.

INSTITUTION Bay Area Research Group, Palo Alto, CA.

SPONS AGENCY Carnegie Corp. of New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 90p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Advisory Committees; *Educational Improvement; *Educational Planning; Elementary Education; Individualized Education Programs; *Instructional Improvement; Low Income Groups; Minority Group Children; Needs Assessment; Principals; Program Administration; Program Evaluation; *School Based Management; *Teacher Role; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS California School Improvement Program; Elementary Secondary Education Act Title I; Florida School Advisory Councils; Individually Guided Education; New York City Local School Development; School Improvement Project (New York City); Schoolwide Projects Provision of Title I

ABSTRACT

Six school-based improvement programs distributed throughout the United States were studied in order to determine how effective these plans have been and what factors help or hinder them. The programs studied shared three central features: 1) focus on the school as a whole; 2) involvement of teachers in designing improvements; and 3) incorporation of elements of rational planning. It was found that while school staffs are able to establish a continuous planning and review process, these processes do not necessarily lead to improved instruction. Two important factors for achieving instructional improvement were found to be the instructional content and support for change. The conditions they found necessary for achieving improvement were that preconditions for change existed, that there was instructional leadership within the school, and that conditions outside the school (i.e. Federal or State government) were favorable. The general conclusions were that: 1) the concept of treating the school as an organizational entity and developing a process for ongoing planning and review with staff involvement is sound; 2) the creation of school based planning and change is difficult; 3) the fact that planning groups can be formed, even though they may not immediately cause instructional improvement, is hopeful; 4) there is little evidence that the most needy students will be overlooked in school-based improvement plans, although more serious risks lie at the district level and disadvantaged schools require more resources; 5) the kinds of knowledge, skills and actions essential to instructional leadership can be used as criteria for identifying and training local staff as change agents and to develop and expand preservice training programs. (CG)

ED262119

BAY
AREA
RESEARCH
GROUP 3144 DAVID AVENUE • PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA 94303 • (415) 493-4425

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jane L. David

Bay Area Research Group

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CAN SCHOOLS IMPROVE THEMSELVES?

A STUDY OF SCHOOL-BASED IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Jane L. David

Susan M. Peterson

UD024448

The study reported here was supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The views expressed are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

(c) Copyright 1984 by Bay Area Research Group

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

1. Background: School-Based Reform 1
   - Evolution of School-Based Approaches 2
   - Features of School-Based Approaches 4
   - Focus of our Work 6
   - Methods 8
   - Profiles of School-Based Programs 11
2. Findings: How School-Based Programs Operate 23
   - Selection of Schools to Participate 24
   - The School Planning Group 27
   - The Process of School-Based Planning 31
   - Instructional Improvement and Uses of the School Plans . . 42
   - Accountability and Program Monitoring 46
3. Analysis: What Works and Why 49
   - Analysis 49
   - A Model for Instructional Improvement 54
4. Implications for Program Sponsors 63
   - School Selection 63
   - Resources 67
   - Regulation 69
   - Accountability Mechanisms 77
5. The Promise of School-Based Reform 81
   - Summary of Findings. 81
   - Conclusions 83

REFERENCES 87

WORDS OF THANKS

We are indebted to the program and school staff who spent a lot of time and energy providing us with valuable information. These educators, already working at their limits to improve schools, were willing to answer seemingly endless questions about their experiences. Without their cooperation, implementation sudies such as this would not be possible.

Throughout the study numerous colleagues and friends stimulated our thinking including Brenda Turnbull, Dan Duke, Mimi Stearns and David Greene. In addition, Sue Hanson, Beverly Caffee Glenn and Dan Duke assisted with data collection and contributed their insights. We also thank Larry Cuban, Maureen McCormack-Larkin, Winifred Green, and Nancy Kreinberg for their contributions to our preliminary ideas.

Brenda Turnbull's skillful editing improved the final report immensely as did comments from Terry Clark, Ellie Farrar and Joe Larkin. As usual, our clerical staff, Mae Peters and Lisa Greene, labored with grace and efficiency through repeated rounds of revisions.

Finally, our thanks to Fritz Mosher and the Carnegie Corporation of New York whose support made the study possible.

1. BACKGROUND: SCHOOL-BASED REFORM

The consensus of the mid-1980s is that something is very wrong with our schools. But that's where the agreement ends. Questions of precisely what is wrong, why it's wrong, and what should be done about it elicit as many different responses as there are respondents. To some the challenge lies in the direction of creating a totally new curriculum more appropriate to the age of information and technology. To others it is enabling schools to do a better job of what they are already trying to do. To still others it is primarily a struggle to secure an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities in the face of threats to the gains made in equity over the last twenty years. What these perspectives have in common is the salient fact that schools are being asked to change in significant ways.

Over the past two decades, a number of different strategies for improving schools have been tried. These strategies vary along many dimensions including their source (federal, state, or local), their assumptions about change (e.g., how comprehensive efforts should be), and their particular focus (e.g., instruction). Building on what has been learned about the process of educational change from these various approaches, a new class of reforms has evolved over the last few years--the school-based strategy. In 1981, the Bay Area Research Group undertook a study of several variants of the school-based strategy. Our goal was to assess their progress in bringing about instructional improvement, especially for disadvantaged students, and to identify the conditions associated with their success. Because these approaches are relatively new, our purpose was to assess the promise of the school-based

strategy for the future and the validity of its assumptions rather than to pass definitive judgment on its short-term impacts.

EVOLUTION OF SCHOOL-BASED APPROACHES

School-based approaches for improving instruction differ from other improvement strategies in their focus on the school as the appropriate unit for designing and implementing change. Since the 1950's, when educational reform moved into the national policy arena, strategies for improvement have run the gamut from targeting resources to districts or to particular types of students, to programs for particular grades or subject areas, to in-service training for teachers and administrators. Only recently has it become fashionable to consider the school itself, rather than the district, as an entity that can be the focus of change.

This shift in emphasis is the result of several strands of research, concomitant societal trends, and frustration born from previous failures. The 1960's brought a style of educational reform that emphasized instructional content or methods (e.g., the new math, Project Follow Through) and a new focus on disadvantaged students (e.g., the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965). By the 1970's researchers and reformers alike discovered the concept of implementation, recognizing that the success of a reform effort depends more upon how it is adapted by particular people in a particular context than upon its original intent or design (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977; Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Williams, 1980).

Attention to implementation led in turn to interest in maximizing the adaptability of reform efforts, involving teachers in the design of what they are to implement, and generally shifting the emphasis from the

content of reforms to the processes they require or foster (Emrick & Peterson, 1978; Farrar, DeSanctis, & Cohen, 1980; Berman, 1981; Fullan, 1982). At the same time educational researchers began to apply concepts from organizational theory to schools, finding that schools share certain features of other organizations but also have features unique to their institutional role in society (Pincus, 1974; Weick, 1976; Miles, 1981). These research trends all contributed to the evolution of a school-based strategy for instructional improvement characterized by: (1) a focus on the school as a whole, (2) involvement of teachers in designing the reform, and (3) incorporation of elements of rational planning.

The growth of school-based approaches was also stimulated by concerns about the effectiveness of categorical programs that target money to particular types of students--some subset of a school's population. Such programs, notably the former Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (now Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act), whose ultimate effects on achievement continue to be debated, have typically resulted in pulling different subsets of students from their regular classrooms to receive special instruction. (National Institute of Education, 1978; Knapp, Stearns, Turnbull, David, & Peterson, 1983). In the absence of agreed-upon and interpretable measures of student achievement attributable to these programs, the debate has shifted from outcomes to program structure, with critics claiming that the pullout structure is disruptive to program participants and other students (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1981; Kimbrough & Hill, 1981). This line of thinking has helped stimulate enthusiasm for reforms aimed at the whole school rather than separate groups of students.

School-based strategies also hold appeal for those frustrated by the

limitations of in-service training programs for teachers. These programs attempt to improve skills but typically occur as one-shot workshops outside the school and do not influence the environment in which teachers will try to implement new skills (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978).

More recently, the growing body of literature on effective schools has emphasized an association between instructionally effective schools and several schoolwide characteristics including instructional leadership from the principal, high expectations for students, collaboration among teaching staff, and a school climate that fosters academic achievement (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Glenn, 1981; Purkey & Smith, 1982).

Like many of the findings of the effective schools research, the argument for school-based approaches to instructional improvement has more intuitive appeal than strong evidence. Part of the intuitive appeal comes from the logic of the argument that people are more likely to change when they have had some voice in the decision to change and in the design of the change effort. Part comes from the fact that a school is an organizationally distinct unit of seemingly manageable size. And part comes from frustration with previous reforms that have focused on other levels--this level hasn't been tried before.

FEATURES OF SCHOOL-BASED APPROACHES

No two school-based programs are alike; nevertheless, a common core of features differentiates these programs from those that are district-, teacher-, or pupil-based. School-based approaches focus on the school as the entity that is to change, and they place primary responsibility and authority for change at that level. This is in contrast to categorical

programs, for example, which typically focus on particular target students within a school and place primary authority at higher levels.

School-based programs also share an emphasis on involving school staff in designing and implementing changes. This involvement generally takes the form of some sort of planning mechanism, derived from models of rational planning, by which a group of teachers (often working with the principal and parents) is responsible for identifying problems, devising solutions, implementing the solutions, and continually assessing and revising their plans.

Beyond these similarities, school-based programs vary considerably. For example, they differ in their requirements or criteria for selecting schools to participate. Some school-based programs bring new funds to participating schools; others do not. Some have specific requirements concerning the composition of the planning group or the form or content of the school plan; others provide only general guidance. Some provide outside assistance through change agents or consultants, whose involvement also varies in intensity across programs. The degree of emphasis on community participation varies across programs, as do the role of the district and the duration of the program.

The history of school-based approaches can be traced back at least to Individually Guided Education (IGE) of the 1960's. California's School Improvement Program and Florida's school-based management date from the mid 1970's, but most manifestations of the strategy are recent. Although a few researchers have studied individual programs in the last few years (Berman, Gjelten, & Izu, 1981; Clark & McCarthy, 1983; Rubin & David, 1981), systematic studies across different school-based efforts have not been conducted.

To understand the potential of school-based approaches for instructional improvement, it is necessary to look across different manifestations of this strategy. Beginning in 1981, we undertook to do just that.

FOCUS OF OUR WORK

Because school-based strategies are often conceived as an alternative to categorical programs targeted to disadvantaged students, we were particularly concerned with their promise for realizing improved educational experiences for such students. Although the notion of school-based approaches has great intuitive appeal, this is no assurance that such approaches can be implemented. The thoughtful assessment and planning that school-based programs envisage is extremely difficult to do in the best of circumstances. We wanted to know whether school staff could conduct meaningful planning in the difficult circumstances found in schools serving primarily disadvantaged students--the schools having both the greatest need for and the greatest challenges to instructional improvement.

Having complicated our task by focusing on schools with disadvantaged students, we simplified it somewhat by limiting ourselves to elementary schools. This resulted in part from the fact that more programs are directed to elementary schools, but it was also a simplifying decision; elementary schools are not as organizationally complex as secondary schools. These decisions limit our findings somewhat. However, given the nature of the questions we asked and the answers we found, we are confident that our findings provide insights relevant to more affluent elementary schools and in certain respects to secondary schools. Our

decision to focus on elementary schools serving disadvantaged children influenced our choice of school-based programs to study. The six programs we selected are:

New York City School Improvements Project (NYC-SIP)

California School Improvement Program (Cal-SIP)

Individually Guided Education (IGE)

Florida School Advisory Councils (Fla)

New York City Local School Development (NYC-LSD)

Schoolwide Projects Provision of Title I (TI SIP)*

Our approach to the study was influenced by our preconception that the role of teachers is crucial in school-based programs. Because instructional improvement ultimately requires that teachers change their behaviors in the classroom, we were most interested in how teachers become involved in school-based programs, their roles in the planning process, and the kinds of changes they implement in their classrooms.

Finally, we chose to concentrate on the questions we believed to be answerable--questions about conditions associated with successful school-based programs rather than questions about which program works best. Because school-based programs are relatively new and have been studied very little, we did not expect to be able to draw conclusions about what works and what doesn't. We did expect, however, to contribute to a growing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the

*Our data on Schoolwide Projects schools were primarily drawn from a study of that provision conducted in 1979-80 (Rubin & David, 1981). During most of the current study the provision was in a state of limbo because it was contained in a set of technical amendments to Chapter 1 which had not been signed into law.

school-based strategy, the conditions associated with success, and the promise of school-based approaches in contrast to alternative strategies (e.g., categorical approaches).

As we imply above, we did not attempt to define and measure success in terms of student outcomes. Given the recency of the programs and the duration of our study, we felt it was too soon to tackle the infinite complexities of analyzing and interpreting test scores. Instead, we focused on the steps logically prerequisite to increased learning: teacher involvement in planning, and the implementation of changes affecting instruction.

METHODS

The complexity of the processes to be studied and the limits of time and resources necessitated a series of carefully weighed compromises. Any study of interventions as complex as school-wide programs in organizations as complex as schools faces an inevitable trade-off between depth of understanding and a corresponding soundness and usefulness of conclusions on the one hand, and breadth of experience and corresponding representativeness on the other. For example, to fully understand how teachers participate in the planning process and react to the actions of a planning group, one would want to spend weeks in a school observing meetings and interviewing teachers. We might have been able to do this in one or two schools but not more, and we would have been left uncertain about the generalizability of our observations and conclusions. At the other extreme, one could send a questionnaire to every school experimenting with some type of school-based program. This approach, however, would produce data of questionable validity and minimal

usefulness in understanding whether a program was or was not successful and why. We therefore needed to define a middle ground in which we could learn as much as possible about each school without sacrificing the variation needed across schools to draw valid conclusions. (See Greene & David, 1984).

The middle ground we chose consisted of selecting a few schools representing each of six school-based approaches or programs. Our sample (see table, below) comprised 32 schools, representing 17 school districts in seven states.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND STATES IN SAMPLE BY PROGRAM

	Schools	States
Cal-SIP	5	1
NYC-LSD	1	1
NYC-SIP	2	1
FLA	5	1
IGE	3	2
TI-SWP	19	6

We selected schools by asking people knowledgeable about the programs to nominate schools they judged to represent the programs' intent--the successes. Having been frustrated by other studies in which researchers try to determine why an intended program never materialized, we felt that we would maximize our chances of drawing useful conclusions by studying what worked. We also recognized that selecting examplars would in no way insure that the resultant sample would contain only successes, even though we relied primarily on nominators with first-hand knowledge of the schools

they recommended.

We visited each school for one to two days during the spring of 1981. During these visits we interviewed the principal and several teachers, including some involved and some not involved in the planning process. Where possible we also interviewed consultants and change agents associated with the program, and parents.

During the visits we also interviewed district or other central office staff knowledgeable about the program. Given our limited time in the schools, we found these conversations particularly useful. Although removed one step from the schools, these staff were typically interested, like us, in what was succeeding and what wasn't and why. Their observations greatly enhanced our data because we were able to hear the contrasts and conclusions they had drawn across more schools than we were able to visit. We also returned to many of these people during the second year to catch up with what had occurred since our visits.

In addition, we have spoken throughout the study with other researchers and practitioners involved in implementing school-based programs. We have incorporated their insights into our thinking. And we have drawn on the relevant research and popular literature as well as our own previous work (particularly our study of the Schoolwide Projects Provisions of the former ESEA Title I legislation).

Our report is organized in a way that reflects the mixture of data sources and our sense of what most needs attention at this stage. In the remainder of this chapter we describe the six school-based programs we studied. In Chapter 2 we present our findings on how the programs work in practice. In Chapter 3 we present our analysis of the conditions associated with successful school-based change. In Chapter 4 we step

back from the school level and discuss the implications of our conclusions for policymakers and program planners. Chapter 5 places our findings and conclusions in the broader context of school improvement.

PROFILES OF SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS

The six school-based improvement programs we studied share the three central features of the school-based improvement strategy discussed above: (1) a focus on the school as a whole; (2) involvement of teachers in designing improvements; and (3) incorporation of elements of rational planning. Thus, most or all of the programs share structural features such as the formation of a school planning group and the development of a written plan. At the same time, the programs differ with regard to such features as the composition and intended role of the planning group, the scope and emphasis of the written plan, and the nature and extent of resources provided to support the improvement process.

Below we present descriptive profiles of the six programs studied. In these profiles we consider the programs' structure, scope, and philosophy of school-based improvement. The profiles highlight both major similarities and important differences in design. They are based on discussions with program developers and staff from the sponsoring agencies as well as review of descriptive materials and reports from studies of individual programs.

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CAL-SIP)

The California Legislature created the California School Improvement Program (Cal-SIP) when it enacted an omnibus school finance reform law in 1977. The program's roots can be traced to an earlier state-financed

program, Early Childhood Education, and to growing concern at the top levels of the state's education department about the limitations of categorical approaches. Cal-SIP is an attempt to place authority and accountability for certain programmatic decisions and funds at the school level, so that these decisions will be made at a point close to the students. To overcome problems of fragmentation and unnecessary duplication of services sometimes associated with multiple categorical programs, SIP has also attempted to encourage school-level coordination of resources and services.

Cal-SIP requires each participating school to establish a school site council, which is intended to serve as the primary vehicle for decision-making, planning, and coordination of services. The council includes representatives of the major constituencies within the school community--the principal, teachers, resource and support staff, and parents. Each group selects its own representatives, and parity in numbers between school employees and non-employees is required. Councils are required to follow a systematic problem-solving process that includes needs assessment and development of a comprehensive written plan detailing behavioral objectives, activities for attaining them, and criteria for assessing performance. The written plan covers three years but can be updated annually.

Cal-SIP supports improvement efforts by awarding annual grants (ranging from about $25,000 to $50,000, depending on the number of students) to councils at participating schools. The state does not target the funds to particular subpopulations or content areas. Instead, the emphasis is on identifying weak points within an individual school's overall instructional program and designing improvements that will enhance

the program for all students.

Any public school in California is eligible to participate in SIP. Participation must be approved first by the school (by the school site council or a temporary group representing school staff and the community) and then by the district. Half the project schools in each district must be selected from among the district's low achieving schools. At the time of our visits, about half the state's elementary schools and approximately 12 percent of its secondary schools received SIP funds. Teams of state staff, consultants, or staff from SIP schools in neighboring districts visit participating schools at intervals of approximately three years. These visits, known as program reviews, are intended both to monitor compliance with program regulations and to assess qualititatively the processes of planning and implementation.

NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (NYC-SIP)

The core of NYC-SIP is the set of five factors identified by Ron Edmonds (1979) in his review of research on effective schools for urban elementary-age students from minority and low income backgrounds. These factors are: (1) instructional leadership from the principal; (2) high expectations for students' academic achievement; (3) emphasis on instruction in basic skills; (4) orderly school climate; and (5) continuous monitoring of student progress. NYC-SIP is based on the assumption that urban schools in which student achievement is generally poor can be improved by focusing on teachers' expectations, basic skills instruction, and the other factors.

The NYC-SIP model for improvement uses a combination of change agents, known as liaisons, and school planning committees to install the five

characteristics in participating schools. Liaisons trained in the characteristics of effective schools and skills associated with change agentry work intensively with participating schools for three years. During the first year, a needs assessment is conducted and a written plan for improvement is prepared. Both of these activities are structured around the five characteristics; the aim is to identify an important problem or weakness in each area and to plan activities that will help the school address the problem. During the second year the plan is implemented. Progress is reviewed annually, and plans are updated or modified as appropriate.

NYC-SIP began operating in ten New York City elementary schools in 1979-80; by 1981-82, the number of participating schools had increased to 25 (six of the original group plus others added in the second and third years). The central office of the New York City Public Schools administers the program. Funding provided by a mix of state, federal, and foundation sources supports the liaisons and other project staff plus an extensive documentation/evaluation effort. Resources provided to schools consist mainly of the liaisons' services (approximately the equivalent of a full-time liaison for two years, with a reduced level of attention in the third year).*

THE LOCAL SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (LSDP)

Also based in New York City, the Local School Development Program

*Our field work was performed in Spring 1981, while NYC-SIP was in its second year of operation. Plans called for discontinuing liaisons' services to a school after three years, with the expectation that school staff would assume responsibility for sustaining the process after this period.

takes a somewhat different approach to school-based improvement. Developed by the New York Urban Coalition and administered by the Coalition and the local school system, LSDP focuses on building a broad base of support for school improvement efforts. LSDP starts from the assumption that all the major school-level constituency groups--administrators, staff, parents, and in some cases students--must be actively involved in the improvement process from the outset, so that they will develop a sense of responsibility for the overall operation of their school. At the same time, LSDP has encouraged higher levels in the system (in New York City this includes the community school districts and the central district office) to support school improvement efforts by providing schools with policy guidelines, incentives for participation, and technical assistance.

The LSDP approach entails establishing a planning group at each school (with members drawn from all the school-level constituency groups) to assess needs, develop a comprehensive written plan, and engage in short- and long-term improvement projects. The planning group acts in an advisory capacity, with the principal retaining final decision-making authority. Although LSDP's ultimate aim is improvement of students' academic achievement, planning groups are expected to examine all aspects of school operations and to develop a comprehensive plan that addresses the school's instructional program, social environment, administration, and physical plant.

Technical support for school-level activities is provided by a team consisting of an LSDP staff member and a community district person. In addition, training workshops and support groups are available to principals, planning groups, parents, community district superintendents, students, and others.

The first year of project operations (1979-80) was set aside for training and other coalition-building efforts. The second year was devoted to development of the comprehensive school plans. Implementation of the school plans began in the third year, when 29 schools representing five community school districts participated in LSDP.

INDIVIDUALLY GUIDED EDUCATION (IGE)

The oldest of the school-based improvement programs included in our study, Individually Guided Education grew out of research and improvement efforts conducted by /I/D/E/A/, a branch of the Kettering Foundation, and by the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning during the late 1960s and early 1970s.* From its outset, IGE has reflected many of the guiding principles shared by the more recent school-based, school-wide reform programs we studied. It is based on the assumption that the school is the appropriate unit for improvement and change efforts. IGE's architects recognized the importance of cultivating internal and external support for change efforts.

IGE offers participating schools a model for improvement that incorporates both pedagogical and organizational components. Although schools interested in IGE are not required to use all its components, IGE is unusual among school-based programs in the fact that it provides an explicit instructional philosophy. A systematic model of individualized instruction constitutes the core of IGE. Students proceed through cycles

*There are differences in emphasis, terminology, and resources between the version of IGE disseminated by the Wisconsin R&D Center and the version disseminated by /I/D/E/A/. In spite of these differences, the two versions share the emphases on pedagogy, organizational structure, and collaborative planning discussed here.

of pre-assessment, activities relevant to specific learning objectives, and post-assessment. Their programs are designed to take into account individual differences in skill levels, learning styles, and interests and to combine individual, small-group, and large-group instruction.

IGE also introduces organizational changes intended to facilitate individualized instruction. The school is divided into learning communities or units, in which a group of teachers collectively assumes responsibility for a group of students. Flexibility in grouping students for instruction is encouraged; students are likely to be grouped by skill level rather than by age or grade. Most day-to-day instructional planning takes place within these communities or units, which normally comprise between four and six teachers, an aide, and 100-150 students. One teacher in each unit is designated as leader; the leader serves on a school-level committee that meets regularly with the principal to address school-wide issues and to promote communication and continuity across the units.

Unlike the other school-based programs, IGE has not operated out of a federal, state, or local agency with special funding set aside for its implementation in schools. However, IGE has been circulated to schools across the country through a number of channels, and a variety of funding sources have been tapped by school and district personnel attempting to install some or all of its components. The schools we visited were introduced to IGE in the mid 1970s, several years prior to our visits.

ESEA TITLE I SCHOOLWIDE PROJECTS (TITLE I SWP)

The Schoolwide Projects provision of Title I (now part of Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation Improvement Act) allowed school districts to use Title I funds to upgrade the overall educational program in eligible

schools. This provision, introduced in the Education Amendments of 1978, stemmed from concerns about the appropriateness of pullout models for remedial instruction (particularly in schools with high concentrations of children receiving such services) as well as interest in the potential of school-based school-wide planning to improve instructional programs.

The Schoolwide Projects provision requires a comprehensive assessment of the educational needs of all students in participating schools, planning for and provision of educational services to all students, evaluation and periodic revision of school plans, and training for teachers and aides. Although the desitrict office has formal responsibility for SWP school plans, planning is to be carried out in collaboration with the school staff and parents; school-level parent advisory councils must approve the written plans.

Schools that participate are relieved of certain requirements that normally apply to schools receiving Title I funds. Specifically, these schools do not need to account for Title I funds separately from other sources, to identify Title I participants separately from other children, or to demonstrate that Title I-supported services supplement rather than replace regular services.

Unlike most of the other school-based programs we studied, Title I SWP has highly restrictive eligibility requirements. Only schools in which 75 percent or more of the students are from low-income families qualify. Participating schools are selected by state- and district-level Title I directors. The district must make supplementary state or local monies available to these schools to cover services for students who are not educationally deprived. The state/local contribution must equal or exceed the Title I allocation on a per-student basis.

FLORIDA: SCHOOL REPORTS AND ADVISORY COUNCILS

We originally included several Florida schools in the study because of state laws calling for school advisory councils and annual school reports and encouraging school-based management. When we visited the state, we found that a number of state laws and regulations include elements of school-based approaches. Rather than attempt to isolate the effects of individual laws, we focused on their combined impact and different schools' approaches to managing the collection of school-based activities. For the sake of clarity, however, we will describe the relevant provisions separately here.

State law requires local school boards to establish advisory councils at the district or the school level. Councils include teachers, students, and parents; details of council composition and procedures for selecting members are not specified by the state. The council's role is advisory; local boards and principals retain the authority to make decisions and have considerable discretion regarding the activities in which councils become involved. Councils may apply to the state for small grants to support their activities.

Annual school and district reports are also required. These reports were originally conceived of as similar to corporations' annual reports to stockholders. They are intended to make information readily available to the community concerning the school's programs, test results, and financial status.

When we visited Florida, we learned that the advisory councils and school reports are viewed mainly as a means of facilitating communication between the home and school as a way of building community support.

Somewhat closer to the notion of school-based planning as a strategy for improving instruction is the idea of school-based management. Essentially, school-based management entails decentralization of various aspects of administration and decisionmaking from the district office to the individual school. It is grounded in the assumption that decisions made at the school level are more responsive to the needs and preferences of the individual school and its community. State law does not mandate school-based management, but it encourages districts to move toward decentralizing decisions in such areas as budgeting and staffing. School-based management does not necessarily lead to increased staff and community involvement in decisions, however; it may simply increase the principal's authority.

Several other activities add to the complexity of the school-based planning picture. Florida districts are required to develop comprehensive five-year plans, updated annually, which include continua of performance objectives tied to the state assessment tests. Schools, too, are expected to engage in systematic, comprehensive planning within the guidelines established in district plans. At the time of our visit, the state was beginning to implement annual audits of districts' planning and management practices that included visits to selected schools.

Florida schools are also visited at five-year intervals by review teams who spend a few days observing classes, talking with staff, and reviewing records as part of the accreditation process. Prior to the review visit, school staff undertake a comprehensive self-study, in which they scrutinize the instructional program and noninstructional aspects of the school. The review team supplements each component of the self-study report with comments and recommendations based on its visit. The review

process and its written product incorporate both internal and external perspectives on the school.

Finally, at the time of our visit Florida schools were in their second year of implementing the Primary Education Project. PREP is a major state-financed effort aimed at strengthening the educational program for children in kindergarten through third grade. Although PREP is not schoolwide in scope, it shares with the other school-based programs an emphasis on systematic planning and the aim of improving instruction for all students. PREP is especially interesting in view of its resemblance to California's Early Childhood Education program--the precursor to that state's School Improvement Program described above.

2. FINDINGS: HOW SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS OPERATE

In this chapter we report our findings concerning the implementation of school-based improvement programs in elementary schools serving children from low-income families. These findings are based on visits to 32 schools, representing 17 school districts and seven states. In addition to our school visits, we met with district staff (and state staff in the cases of Cal-SIP, the Florida programs, and Title I SWP). In several places we have supplemented information we gathered with reports from other studies of these programs. Where we report information that we did not obtain ourselves, we identify these sources.

We have organized our findings into five topical areas that deal with management and implementation of school-based programs. These five areas are: (1) selection of schools; (2) formation and functioning of school planning groups; (3) development of written plans; (4) uses of the plans; and (5) program monitoring. Although we point out systematic differences across programs where we found them, programmatic variations are not a major theme in our discussion of findings. There are two reasons for this. First we have not conceived our our study as a set of six implementation case studies. Others have examined implementation of individual programs in more depth.* Our aim here has been to address questions about the implementation and impacts of the school-based strategy in general.

Second, we did not find important differences associated with the

*Readers interested in Cal-SIP are referred to Berman, Weiler, Czesak, Gjelten, & Izu (1981) and Berman & Gjelten (1982). A three-year implementation study of NYC-SIP is reported in Clark & McCarthy (1983). IGE has been the subject of numerous studies; among them is Popkewitz, Tabachnick, & Wehlage (1982). Title I SWP implementation is described in Rubin and David (1981).

individual programs. Details of procedure, format, and the like differed across programs because school staff generally conformed to the detailed requirements of each program. However, these variations did not materially affect the essence of what happened locally. Thus, many of the findings reported here reflect implementation patterns that hold across schools and programs. Other findings reflect school-to-school differences. These differences were as likely to occur between schools within the same program as between schools in different programs.

SELECTION OF SCHOOLS TO PARTICIPATE

Theoretically, a school-based program could be directed to every school within the sponsoring agency's jurisdiction (a district, state, or the entire country). However, limited resources and other considerations have led most sponsors of school-based programs to limit their efforts to selected schools.* School selection comprises two sets of decisions. First the program planners and sponsors identify a pool of eligible schools; second the participants are chosen from this pool.

In most of the programs we studied, the pool of eligible schools includes all public elementary schools in the sponsoring agency's district or state.** However, some sponsoring agencies have taken steps to ensure that schools with minority and low-income populations are included. (Cal-SIP, for example, requires that half the project schools in each district be selected from among the district's low-achieving schools.)

*Among the six programs we studied, only the Florida statutes calling for School Advisory Councils and annual reports apply systemwide.

**The Schoolwide Projects provision of Title I is limited to schools serving very high concentrations of disadvantaged students--a small subset of the Title I pool.

Most of the programs we studied have relied on self-selection as a way of attracting schools where the principal and the staff are open to examining their program and willing to undertake serious change. In practice, however, the commitment to self-examination, collaborative planning, and instructional improvement varied substantially among the schools in each program. Several factors accounted for this variation.

In the case of a new program, the pressure to get started with orientation sessions and other early activities sometimes led to shortcuts in choosing schools. In NYC-SIP's first year, for example, program staff selected schools on the basis of nominations by district officials and consent from the principal because it was difficult to convene teachers and other staff during the summer. At some schools, liaisons were able to generate enthusiasm among the staff and support from the principal after several months of intensive work. However, staff or principals at other schools remained unsupportive throughout the planning process. According to the program's evaluators, internal conflicts or lack of commitment from staff and administration led three of the ten original schools to withdraw from the program after the first year (Clark & McCarthy, 1983).

Involvement of school staff (and sometimes parent representatives) in the decision to participate in a school-based program was often essentially ceremonial. We did not hear stories of serious internal discussions regarding the pros and cons of participation. Nor did we hear of teachers initiating participation. Instead, we heard of teacher groups being given the opportunity to endorse decisions already made by district- and school-level administrators. Principals told us that they had recommended participation to their staffs because they had seen a school-based program as offering valuable resources and as compatible with their ideas about

school management. Teachers recalled presentations by their principals emphasizing the resources that would come to the school and stressing the opportunities for staff to help shape their school's program.*

District-level factors also influenced school selection. In the case of Title I SWP, decisions about participation were effectively made at the district level. Title I directors in many districts with eligible schools chose not to take advantage of the Schoolwide Projects provision because they did not have access to the necessary matching funds. Others believed that the cost and effort of disrupting school programs and developing comprehensive plans exceeded the benefits of relief from in-school targeting. In its first year, Title I SWP was implemented in only 19 districts (Rubin & David, 1981).

In other programs, district officials exerted their influence in other ways. Several principals told us their superiors had asked them to "volunteer" or that they had agreed to participate in order to avoid some other, less attractive program. Because district officials viewed Cal-SIP as an expansion of the earlier ECE program into the upper elementary and secondary levels, schools that had received ECE support were usually given first priority for SIP funds, with the expectation that others would be added as more money became available. IGE, which does not necessarily bring new funds to a school, was introduced into some districts after the hiring of a new superintendent or other senior official who had successful

*Our study was limited to schools participating in at least one school-based program. However, some of the schools--and schools we have visited for other studies--had declined opportunities to participate in other school-based programs. Staff who recalled decisions not to participate described presentations emphasizing recordkeeping requirements and other negative aspects of the programs. Such presentations usually reflected the principal's prior decision not to participate.

experience with the program in another setting. Typically the new district administrator recommended IGE to principals, some of whom investigated it and proposed it to their faculties.

THE SCHOOL PLANNING GROUP

A group involved in planning and carrying out improvement activities is a central element of school-based approaches, although the size, composition, and authority of the group varies across programs. In the schools we visited, group membership generally corresponded closely to program guidelines. Schools in Cal-SIP had school site councils with equal numbers of school staff and parents; schools in IGE had program improvement committees whose members represented grade levels or teaching teams; and so on. The principal's formal role in the group varied, generally corresponding to differences in program requirements. In some cases principals were voting members; in others, they presided over meetings without casting a vote on group decisions. In NYC-SIP the liaisons either chaired meetings of the planning group or worked closely with the group in a resource capacity.

Most programs give participating schools some discretion as to the size of the group and the method used to select its members. In practice, group size and selection procedures varied both across and within programs. Sometimes the membership of an existing group satisfied program requirements, and this body was designated the school planning group. Occasionally existing groups were combined. In small schools (with less than about 15 classroom teachers), the council often included the entire faculty. In larger schools (and in small schools where parents served as members of the group), some type of representative structure was generally

used. Elections were occasionally held. More often, however, volunteers were sought. If the number of staff or parent volunteers exceeded what was presumed to be a reasonable size for the council (which it usually did not), an election was called.

Principals sometimes asked particular teachers or parents to volunteer for membership. At some schools such actions led to the perception that only those who supported the principal were on the group. In other cases staff viewed similar actions as a way of attracting the most effective staff and parents to the council. One principal posted a deliberately unattractive description of the group members' responsibilities and then spoke privately with the teachers he believed would be most effective on the council. (Because council members received a small stipend for after-school time at meetings, union rules demanded that the most senior teachers be given priority in the selection process.)

Several programs require or recommend that the schoolwide planning group include parents, and the schools we visited complied with such requirements where they applied. However, inclusion of parents in the planning group did not typically lead to substantive involvement of parents in instructional planning. School councils that included parent members functioned almost exclusively as vehicles for enhancing communication between the school and the community. Staff generally referred to these councils as "the parent group." In meetings that we attended or heard about, a variety of issues (including program budgets and plans) were presented to the councils, and parents had the opportunity to voice their opinions and raise questions. However, school staff members on the councils typically presented a united front on issues raised for consideration. The limited discussion that took place dealt mainly with

resolving questions and concerns voiced by parent members.

When we questioned staff about the lack of disagreement during these meetings, they responded that meetings of the parent groups were not the appropriate forum for internal debate about the school's instructional program. They reported that parents did not feel comfortable with an active role in curriculum planning; except in cases where heated local controversies had arisen, parents preferred to leave this area to the professionals. The main purpose of the parent group meetings was to let interested parents know what was going on in the school and to elicit their support.

Schoolwide planning groups that did not include parents often served as vehicles for communication between the administration and the rest of the staff. We did not find planning groups that took on substantial responsibility for coordinating the content and logistics of all programs and services in the school--the "umbrella" function envisioned in some school-based approaches.* Usually the group's role in decisions was comparatively modest, although this role varied, depending mainly on school-specific factors such as the principal's management style and his or her relationship with the planning group.

Principals who played strong leadership roles in their schools tended to use their councils both as vehicles for spreading information and as sounding boards. These principals went into council meetings well

*Preliminary results from a multi-year study of Cal-SIP indicate that school site councils do occasionally play this role. However, the councils the Cal-SIP study characterized in this way were found in schools serving middle-income communities. Councils in schools serving large proportions of disadvantaged and other special needs students did not become involved in coordinating resources and services associated with their schools' multiple targeted programs (Berman et al, 1981).

prepared; they presented ideas to the group for consideration, almost always with a recommendation for action. (In some cases it was a vice principal or another second-level administrator who presented issues and recommendations to the group, after a preliminary meeting of the principal's cabinet--a smaller, selected group.) Normally the group endorsed the principal's recommendation, although they sometimes discussed alternatives first. However, both principals and teachers argued that these councils were important because they informed teachers about upcoming decisions and events and gave teachers a legitimate forum in which to express their views. Whether teachers' preferences prevailed was not always important to them; what mattered was that they were consulted before decisions affecting them were made.

The extent to which staff members not in the planning group believed that the group was constituted fairly and that their own interests were represented was related to three factors. First, nonparticipants were more likely to view their councils as appropriately constituted when members represented explicit constituencies than when they all served "at large." A common and convenient structure for elementary schools was for one teacher from each grade* to serve on the council, along with representatives of classroom aides, special programs, support staff, and (depending on the program) parents.

Second, communication between council members and the staff they represented was important. In schools where staff reported that their interests were well represented and that they were kept informed about

*In schools with teaching teams or nontraditional organizational structures, a representative was typically selected by each team. The point is that planning group members represented constituencies that were part of the school's existing structure.

schoolwide issues, time was set aside on a regular basis for council members to meet with their constituencies (for example, after monthly council meetings). These often amounted to grade-level meetings which the teachers used for within-grade instructional planning as well as discussion of schoolwide issues.

Finally, staff concerns about the planning group's representativeness were closely related to their perceptions of the group's role in the school. In schools where the faculty and principal viewed the group mainly as a vehicle for keeping parents informed and soliciting their support, representativeness of staff members was not a salient issue. In cases where the group served as an important communication link between the administration and the faculty, on the other hand, representativeness was important.

THE PROCESS OF SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Once the school planning group has been formed, the process of school-based planning begins with a needs assessment. The scope of the needs assessment and methods used to gather data varied somewhat across the schools we visited. Most of this variation was related to differences in program requirements; scope and methods were typically consistent with program specifications. Most needs assessments were questionnaire surveys of staff views concerning problems and priorities for improvement. The survey often included parents and sometimes students. Questionnaires to parents were usually mailed or sent home with their children; response rates were generally low, particularly for low-income parents. Student demographics, test data, and other types of information were also compiled,

depending on program requirements. Most programs provided school staff with sample instruments and formats for compiling data, although staff could add to the sample instruments or develop their own.

Guidelines for most of the programs call for comprehensive needs assessments. Staff and parent surveys included questions about the school's reading, mathematics, and language arts programs; provisions for handicapped, limited-English-proficient, and disadvantaged children; staff development; parent involvement or community relations; and school climate. Responsibility for collecting and compiling the needs assessment data typically fell to a second-level administrator (e.g., a program manager, specialist, or vice principal) or to the planning group.

Needs assessments were carried out somewhat differently in NYC-SIP schools. Usually the liaison(s) assigned to a NYC-SIP school interviewed the principal and selected staff and parents (with questionnaires to the rest); compiled data on student performance; and collected other information. With assistance from the citywide system's evaluation unit (which was documenting and evaluating the program), the liaison(s) then prepared a needs assessment report which examined in narrative form problems and resources associated with Edmonds' list of characteristics of effective schools.

At most of the schools we visited, the comprehensive needs assessments generated large amounts of data. However, the connection between the data and subsequent improvements to the instructional program was not always clear. Two major factors appear to have limited the usefulness of the data: (1) the types of needs staff and parents typically identified, and (2) the amount of attention given to analysis and interpretation of the data. The first factor applied across schools and programs; the second

varied across schools independently of programs.

On their own, school staff and parents rarely pointed to the need for new instructional methods or basic changes in the school's organizational structure. Instead they cited the need for tangible items like additional materials (a new reading series, more consumables), equipment, and improvements to the physical plant (a teachers' lounge or a new gym). In some cases they stressed the need for more classroom teachers or aides, or for retaining staff members whose jobs were jeopardized by budget cuts.

The former principal of a Cal-SIP school spoke of his efforts to move teachers beyond seeing "more materials" as the answer to all their instructional problems. When he arrived at the school he found teachers hoarding textbooks and other materials (some used and some not) in their classrooms. Still they wanted more materials. Because no one knew what was available elsewhere in the school, materials budgets were not used efficiently and the instructional program suffered from both gaps and redundancies. This principal struck a bargain with his staff; he would help them get the materials they wanted for their classrooms if they would agree to allow an inventory of materials and to undertake schoolwide planning to strengthen the instructional program.

The extent to which needs assessment data were analyzed varied widely across schools. Often an administrator tabulated the findings and reported frequency counts with little or no additional analysis. Staff at schools where this occurred rarely characterized their needs assessment as having played a role in identifying priorities for improvement. Instead they cited various activities begun because the principal, a teacher, or some other person "had a good idea" or "had attended a good inservice workshop and thought the rest of the staff would benefit from it."

In other cases staff consistently cited connections between needs assessment and subsequent improvement activities. In these schools we heard remarks like, "Our needs assessment showed that we've strengthened the reading program but wanted to give more attention to developing children's writing skills" and "We wanted a better way of preparing children to take standardized tests." In talking with the principals and change agents at this group of schools, we learned that they generally had some definite priorities for improvement prior to the needs assessment--priorities that closely matched those described by the teachers. In some cases principals or changes agents had presented these priorities to the staff before the needs assessment; in other cases they had interpreted the data very loosely to support their own priorities.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WRITTEN PLAN

The programs we studied generally call for information collected through the needs assessment to provide the basis for the next step of the planning process--the preparation of the written plan.* Program sponsors view development of the school plan and its ratification by the relevant stakeholders--the principal and the faculty at large and often (depending on the program) the district office--as major milestones in the school improvement process.

Planning groups usually viewed development of the written plan as one of their main tasks. They typically delegated responsibility for drafting sections of the plan to small working groups or component committees. Each working group had three to five members (often including teachers not

*Among the programs we examined, only IGE does not require a written plan. Since the three IGE schools we visited were also involved in other school-based programs, even these schools had written plans.

on the larger school council) and focused on a particular component of the plan--e.g., the reading program, parent involvement, school climate.* The number of working groups varied across programs, depending on program requirements. Where program guidelines called for parents to participate in development of the plan, the working groups included parent members. However, parents tended to play an active role only in groups that planned activities for parents; teachers and other professional staff prepared the plans for instructional components. The working groups met regularly (sometimes as often as weekly) for several months to develop the draft sections of the plans . During this time they developed lists of objectives, activities, timetables, and evaluation criteria.

In a number of the schools we visited, someone had assumed the role of coordinator. In NYC-SIP schools the liaison usually served as coordinator. In other programs the role was usually filled by a resource specialist or second-level administrator (e.g., a program manager) whose salary was paid partly or entirely out of funds associated with the planning project. The coordinator often worked closely with the principal; however, in the schools we visited principals themselves did not play this role.

Some coordinators were highly directive, steering the working groups and the council toward specific priorities, materials, consultants, and ideas. Others viewed their job as facilitative--working out the logistics of producing the plan, filling gaps, resolving minor inconsistencies across sections, and ensuring that the finished plan complied with guidelines

*The major exception to participation of the planning group in the development of the written plan ws Title I SWP, where written school plans were part of the funding applications. School-level PACs were designated the schoolwide planning groups and signed off on the applications. Only in schools where PACs had previously helped to prepare the application were the schoolwide groups active in writing the plans.

concerning format and content. In one school the job was given to a paraprofessional and was limited to logistical support--reminding the teachers of deadlines, getting draft materials typed and distributed, scheduling meetings, etc.*

Variations in the nature of the coordinator's role appeared to depend mainly on local factors (such as the individual coordinator's skills, assertiveness, and relationships with the principal and the faculty). In most programs we found some highly directive coordinators and some facilitative coordinators, who tried to make plans reflect goals set by the faculty. Liaisons at NYC-SIP schools tended to take a directive stance, steering planning groups toward activities they believed would lead to improvements in the five areas identified by Edmonds.

In schools where no individual had assumed responsibility for coordination, the planning process usually ran into problems. In these schools we heard frequent complaints from staff, mainly about multiple planning groups with overlapping responsibilities or excessive recordkeeping requirements. We found some schools in which working groups organized around program components and within-grade groups of teachers were both involved in detailed instructional planning. Generally this occurred where new administrators or multiple programs had imposed new committee structures on the school without dismantling existing ones or reconsidering their role. Some principals and resource personnel acted to streamline cumbersome committee structures. Where duplicative structures persisted, their tasks often overlapped and staff reported frustration and rivalry.

*The use of paraprofessionals in this capacity was standard practice in this school's district--a custom we encountered nowhere else.

In other cases the problem lay not with the committee structures but with the proliferation of recordkeeping requirements over time. It often appeared that conscientious staff had imposed these problems on themselves. Each working group had developed detailed objectives and documentation procedures for its component. However, no one had assumed responsibility for looking at the plan as a whole to assess the combined impact of these requirements. As a result, recordkeeping requirements tended to accumulate over time, eventually becoming unwieldy. At one school where this occurred, external reviewers recommended that the staff eliminate redundancies in their recordkeeping procedures. However, no one at the school was willing to accept the responsibility for deciding which records to eliminate.

CONTENTS OF THE WRITTEN PLANS

The written plans from the schools we visited were usually compilations of the component-level plans, supplemented by whatever descriptive information the program's sponsoring agency required. Although the programs differ in the number and nature of components they require, we were struck by the similarity across schools and programs in the general format of the written plans.

Within each component the typical plan specified performance objectives, activities to be carried out, a schedule for implementing the activities, and criteria or procedures for determining whether each objective has been attained. In most plans, objectives were defined in terms of student performance on standardized tests or other measures (e.g., "By June 1983, 61 percent of the students will score above the 50th

percentile on the California Achievement Test;" "89 percent of the students will meet District Proficiency Standards in reading"). Some plans followed a "discrepancy analysis" model, which entailed listing current student performance levels alongside the performance objectives. Only rarely did analysis of the discrepancy go beyond identifying the number of students not meeting the objective (or subtracting the actual mean percentile score from the desired score) to consideration of possible causes for poor performance.

Often the school plans' listings of activities amounted to a description of the school's instructional program in the major subject areas. Some descriptions were brief:

> The classroom teachers will diagnose each student's skills, prescribe a program, and evaluate each student's progress in mathematics.
>
> The classroom teachers will utilize the Mathematics Around Us series or Developing Mathematical Processes daily.
>
> The classroom teachers will utilize flexible groupings for math instruction.
>
> The classroom teachers will provide appropriate manipulative materials for instruction, reinforcement and enrichment.
>
> The principal and teachers will purchase supplementary instructional supplies with appropriate project funds as needed.
>
> (excerpt from a school plan, mathematics component)

Other lists were longer and more specific:

> Staff will compare results for individual student achievement by analyzing Item Analysis of CAT taken in Spring 1980. Retest in Spring 1981.
>
> Test and place new students and record student's progress on group and individual math continuum profiles.
>
> Teachers will evaluate student progress toward Mastery of Proficiency Standards, and report this to parents.
>
> Students will be grouped flexibly according to skill needs and be

provided with appropriate instruction and grouping based on results of diagnostic data. Both heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping will be observed.

Students will use a variety of materials, experiences and instructional methods in response to individual needs.

Students will be provided with multi-media activities in Spanish and English in the Media Center, Learning Center, and classrooms.

Math time drill tests will be provided for all 1-4 staff. Tests will be organized sequentially for grades 1-4 in the areas of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

Low achievers, identified by continuous diagnostic procedures, will receive intensive skill development in their specific area of weakness in math. They will be observed working with manipulatives, taking math drills at their appropriate levels, Schoolhouse Math, tape math drills, using chalkboards to record answers, playing games which reinforce the facts they have learned, drilling each other on math facts...

High achievers identified through daily performance will be provided opportunities for continuous growth in the areas of their interests in math. They will be observed working on advanced skills using skill booster activities; doing peer tutoring or drilling...

(excerpt from a school plan, mathematics component)

Although these two excerpts differ considerably with respect to the level of detail presented, they are both examples taken from comprehensive written plans. Comprehensive plans contained descriptions of the instructional program for the major subject areas. The descriptions typically identified the types of materials to be used, the types of services to be provided, and the types of testing to be carried out. The more detailed plans even listed the types of activities in which students should be engaged. However, the comprehensive plans typically included little or no information regarding: (1) how the activities, materials, and services described were different from the instructional program currently in place, or (2) how changes in curriculum and instruction would be introduced and supported. In addition, the connection between activities listed under staff

We found some plans that differed from the comprehensive plans in three ways. First, instead of describing the school's instructional program, they identified one or more limited sequences of related activities. Second, changes in curriculum and instruction, management practices, or school climate--rather than higher test scores--were identified as the immediate objectives of these actions. Third, these plans tended to be briefer and more focused than the comprehensive plans, which often ran to 50 or more pages. An excerpt from a focused school plan follows:

Identified Need

1. Based upon the results of the school needs assessment (70 percent of the respondents indicated that an effective schoolwide reading and mathematics program was definitely not characteristic of the school) and a consensus of the school planning group (the utilization of a single basal reading and a single mathematics textbook series to provide systematic and integrated instruction in reading and math as well as the use of schoolwide reading and math periods are recognized as sound educational practices), there is a need to implement coordinated schoolwide reading and mathematics programs.

Proposed Solution

1a. To select and purchase a single reading basal and mathematics textbook series for grades 1-6.

1b. To implement the schoolwide reading and mathematics program.

Activities

1a1. Basic Skills Subcommittee and prinicipal will analyze various basals and math textbooks against the following criteria: conforms to district and school goals and objetives for effective instruction in reading and math by late February 1980.

1a2. Subcommittee will organize information and write and disseminate a report of findings to principal, staff, and parents by early March 1980.

1a3. Principal will provide input into subcommittee recommendations and present (for discussion) the one recommended basal and math textbook series to be purchased (at March faculty conference and PTA meeting).

1a4. Member of subcommittee will order basal and math textbook series for grades 1-6 by April 1, 1980 to insure that each reading and math group in all classes can fully utilize the one series by September 1980.

group in all classes can fully utilize the one series by September 1980.

1a5. Evaluation of selection and purchase of basals and math textbook series.

1b1. Teachers will structure classroom reading and math programs to conform to schoolwide policy: at least two basal reading groups (perhaps more) and two math groups (perhaps more) will be set up to meet heterogeneous class needs by September 1980.

1b2. Staff development activities designed to train staff in the effective use of the basal and math text will be presented for all classroom teachers on a grade-by-grade basis during September and October 1980 by the publishers of the reading and math series purchased. Agendas and minutes will be distributed to staff.

1b3. Staff development activities designed to train staff in the effective coordination of instruction, in reading and math, from grade to grade will be scheduled for all classroom teachers during November and December 1980. These workshops will be given by reading and math coordinators from the district office. Agendas will be distributed to staff prior to workshops. Minutes of workshops will be distributed to staff following sessions.

1b4. Intra- and inter-grade conferences related to coordination of instruction in reading and math will be held on a monthly basis starting January 1981 and held by a school-based reading and/or math teacher. Agendas and minutes will be distributed to staff.

1b5. Teachers will utilize only the recently purchased reading basals and math texts as primary instructional tools in the classrooms. Teachers will follow prescribed instructional programs as presented in teacher's manuals in reading and math, as well as learnings from staff development activities by the end of March 1981.

1b6. Evaluation of implementation of schoolwide reading and math program.

The problem identified in this excerpt is described in terms of the school's instructional program rather than students' performance on tests. The proposed solution is directly related to the problem as defined, and the list of activities constitutes a sequence of steps for realizing the solution. Instead of trying to describe the school's reading and math program in full, the authors of this plan concentrated on developing an outline of the actions they would take to improve it. The plan lists the responsibilities of the subcommittee, the principal, the teachers, and others, although it allows

each group or individual flexibility in carrying out assigned tasks.

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND USES OF THE SCHOOL PLANS

In previous sections of this chapter we described the process through which schools in our study formed planning groups and wrote their plans. We found that school personnel followed program regulations and guidelines governing the planning process closely. The composition of most planning groups matched requirements; the written plans used suggested formats and contained all required components.

The connection between the planning process and instructional improvement is less straightforward. We found some evidence of changes in virtually every school we visited. However, identifying the linkage between the planning process and the implementation of significant instructional changes is complicated by several factors. Some factors are associated with the limitations of our study or features of the programs themselves. Others stem from the multiple meanings attached to the term "school-based improvement" and the complexity of the structures and settings in which the schools exist.

The major limitation introduced by the design of our study is the fact that we were unable to observe changes firsthand. Our findings regarding changes in schools' instructional programs and other uses of the written plans are based on school staff members' reports of events at their schools. In all cases we interviewed principals, other administrators, teachers from multiple grade levels, special program staff, and instructional aides (where they were used) to obtain information from as many internal perspectives as possible.

The second limitation of our data on changes is the problem of attribution. Did reported changes come about because of the school-based programs, or did they result from other influences on the school? School staff could not always trace the history of the changes they cited. Classroom teachers, for example, knew that they had begun using a new reading series or that they had developed lists of reading skills and student objectives for each grade, but they were uncertain as to the original impetus for these changes. By talking to school and district administrators, we were usually able to gain some clarity on the question of attribution. However, the issue cannot be fully resolved.

As noted above, the written plans often described curricula, grouping practices, and the like without indicating whether these items amounted to changes over existing approaches. Our interviews helped us understand what had actually changed at the schools. However, the interviews also revealed that changes in the instructional program were not always paramount in the minds of the teachers.

Several schools had recently acquired new principals. Others had experienced major changes in staff and student populations (usually as a result of school closings or boundary shifts) or cuts in funding level. Changes like these were highly salient in the schools where they had occurred. Sometimes they appeared to serve as an impetus to reconsideration of existing instructional practices. However, organized efforts to respond to major changes in staff, leadership, or student population constructively usually followed several weeks or months of uncertainty. During this period the planning groups were not typically active. Plans made the previous year were put on hold or given less importance as staff members became accustomed to the presence of a new principal or the influx of new teachers and

students. While this was occurring, the changes teachers described were not likely to be the direct result of the schoolwide planning process.

In other cases school staff cited improvements that they associated with the efforts of their planning groups. However, these changes were often noninstructional in nature. The most common example was development of student behavior codes spelled out in a handbook of school rules and policies. Teachers were virtually unanimous in characterizing these handbooks and policies as useful. They helped to resolve specific problems and created a sense that the rules were clear to staff and students and that they were enforced consistently.

Many teachers we spoke with argued that the creation of an orderly and equitable school climate would lead to improvements in their students' academic performance. However, we noted a tendency for planning groups at some schools to become preoccupied with issues of student management to the exclusion of issues directly related to instruction. Development of rules for students' behavior in the lunchroom, dismissal procedures, policies related to students who arrived at school early, etc., continued to occupy the group's attention even in schools where we judged the atmosphere to be very orderly.

Where school councils devoted a sizeable portion of their attention to the instructional components of their written plan, their primary concern was sometimes compliance rather than change. These councils often devoted considerable time to meeting and to preparing plans that followed prescribed formats closely. School staff were familiar with the contents of their plans and reported that the plans were used regularly. For the most part, however, planning groups at these schools focused their attention on documenting fidelity to the written plan rather than on using the plan as a means of

changing their instructional program. Coordinators or component groups distributed lists of objectives and activities from the plan to teachers periodically (usually monthly). Teachers were instructed to check off items they completed and return the list to the group or the coordinator.

Teachers at these schools sometimes characterized the checklists as helpful reminders that "keep us on our toes;" coordinators and planning group members cited the value of having "documentation that we're following our plan." However, little in the plans and checklists prompted teachers to do things differently--to use new materials, grouping practices, or teaching techniques. Staffs tended to view their plans as contracts which they were expected to fulfill rather than as working documents that they could change as appropriate. They wrote their plans conservatively, setting objectives cautiously and emphasizing careful recordkeeping over changes in instructional practice.

We found examples of this emphasis on fidelity in most of the programs. However, it appeared more often in schools with several years of experience in programs that called for written plans and that periodically sent out monitoring tems to visit participating schools. Staff in these schools were very concerned about the need to demonstrate to outsiders that they had obeyed all the rules and had followed their written plans closely.

We found some planning groups that focused directly on strengthening the instructional program. Usually these groups concentrated on the curriculum--the content of instruction. They became involved in standardizing the curriculum within grade levels and articulating instruction across grades. Group members reported selection of a schoolwide reading series, development of performance objectives coordinated across grade levels, and similar activities as their major accomplishments. Less often

councils were involved in efforts to examine and improve teaching practice--the conduct of instruction in the classroom.

Planning groups that focused their efforts on improving curriculum and instruction were characterized by the presence of an instructional leader who worked closely with the group. This leader was an individual knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction who voiced definite ideas about problems in the school's instructional program and about changes that would alleviate these problems.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PROGRAM MONITORING

Mechanisms for monitoring the process and impacts of planning are an important element of school-based programs. Although monitoring procedures vary across programs, we focus here on the qualitative approach known as the "school review" or "program review". In this approach to monitoring, teams from the sponsoring agency or nearby districts visit participating schools. The review team typically interviews staff members, observes in classrooms, and checks records maintained by the teachers and the school over a period of two to three days. Part of the team's job is to monitor compliance with program regulations (for schools with multiple special programs, several sets of regulations may be involved). The other part of their job is to examine the mechanism and process of school-based planning and to assess the implementation of the school plan.

At the schools we visited, perceptions of the balance between these two aspects of the review team's job were typically quite different from the views expressed by the sponsoring agency. Sponsoring agency staff emphasized the qualititative aspects of the review visits, regarding them as an advance over compliance checks because team members can view instruction in the

classroom and offer recommendations for improvements. School staff, on the other hand, perceived compliance as the emphasis, reporting that review teams checked to see not only whether they had obeyed all the regulations but also to see whether they had followed their written school plan.

Although teachers and principals were often critical of the school review visits, they devoted considerable energy to preparing for them. (The frequency with which a school is visited varies across programs, ranging from about three to five years.) A review visit was a major event in the school year. Teachers spent a good deal of time making sure that their lesson plans and student records were up to date and that their classrooms were arranged properly. School plans were scrutinized so that evidence could be produced to demonstrate that planned activities were proceeding on schedule. Rehearsals for the visit were common practice. In one school we visited, two rehearsals had been held: one with school staff and parents acting as the review team, the other with district personnel serving as practice reviewers.

Because of the way we selected our sample, we were not surprised to learn that most of the schools had had "good" reviews--i.e., mainly positive findings. Reviewers made some suggestions for improvement, although staff usually dismissed the suggestions (and rejected "bad" reviews generally) as based on sketchy evidence or as "impractical for our particular school".

We noted two different ways in which a "good" review seems to affect a school's staff. One school had been reviewed near the end of a particularly difficult year. It had acquired a new principal, who brought with him half the staff and students from his old school (which had been closed at the end of the previous year). Staff already at the school had to adjust to two major changes: the new principal's management style, which differed markedly from that of his predecessor, and the presence for the first time of a large

number of disadvantaged and low-achieving children. A construction project had fallen seriously behind schedule, leaving the staff with no good place to hold meetings for most of the school year. The favorable report from the review team appeared to have boosted everyone's spirits, leaving them with a sense that the year had gone well in spite of early tensions and problems. In another school the staff reported no particularly noteworthy events during the year; the review team's favorable report signalled to this staff that they were doing a good job. Although the academic performance of students at this school had not shown improvement and was still below average for the district, teachers did not seem to feel that improvement was needed. Thus, while a good review can contribute to staff morale, it may also risk encouraging complacency.

3. ANALYSIS: WHAT WORKS AND WHY

The findings presented in Chapter 2 demonstrate that schools are able to form planning groups, develop written plans, and implement changes. But these changes are typically noninstructional in nature; it is rare for the planning process to lead to changes in instructional practices. In the first part of this chapter we analyze why there is little connection between the planning process and instructional change. In the second part of the chapter we present our model of what is needed if planning is to lead to instructional improvement.

ANALYSIS

The planning process is the centerpiece of the school-based strategy for instructional improvement. It is the mechanism through which school staff are to define reforms appropriate to their school. Thus, our finding that planning rarely leads to instructional change calls into question one of the basic assumptions of school-based programs.

We think there are two sources of explanation for the lack of connection between planning and instructional change, and we discuss them in turn below. The first is the content of the planning process. If instruction is not the main focus of planning, one would not expect instructional change to result. The second is the relationship between the plans and their implementation. Even if plans for change focus on instruction, there may be little connection between the plans and subsequent actions.

CONTENT OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

One source of explanation for the lack of instructional change is the content of the planning process. We should mention at the outset that the content of this process rarely corresponds perfectly to what is written up in a formal plan. What a planning group actually talks about, which we call the group's "agenda," typically differs from the written plan for a number of obvious reasons. Plans tend to be written conservatively both because they represent group consensus and because they are written to conform to program requirements. The latter is particularly true for programs that monitor whether staff are doing what the plan says; school staff are not likely to put into writing plans whose implementation is problematic. Therefore, the following discussion concerns the planning group's agenda--the plans for which they have the most enthusiasm and support--rather than the content of the written plan.

Planning groups typically develop agendas that focus on noninstructional aspects of the school (e.g., discipline policies, community relations, physical plant improvements). As we described in Chapter 2, the central aim of these noninstructional efforts is usually to enhance the quality of life for the school's staff and clients. One reason for developing a noninstructional agenda is a belief that such changes are prerequisite to instructional improvement. Noninstructional agendas are particularly common in schools beset by behavior problems, absenteeism, and vandalism. In such schools, staff and parents do not expect much teaching and learning to occur; they have more immediate concerns about personal safety and standards for behavior.

There are several other reasons for planning groups to gravitate toward noninstructional problems. One is that they tend to be viewed as

collective problems--schoolwide issues which affect everyone and therefore require schoolwide solutions. Another is that groups find it comparatively easy to reach consensus on the definition of such problems (e.g., we have to get rid of drugs on the playground and get students into classrooms) and on proposed solutions (e.g., we need a new discipline code). Moreover, in the noninstructional domain, teachers can specify solutions at an operational level. For example, a popular solution to discipline problems was to institute an "assertive discipline" policy which specifies what actions are to be taken in what situtations.

In contrast, instructional problems tend to be viewed as within-classroom problems whose definitions and solutions depend upon the idiosyncrasies of particular students and teachers (Lortie, 1975). Trying to define and solve such problems in a group is both difficult and potentially threatening to teachers because it requires public admission of problems. In addition, individual teachers are not a particularly good source of concrete plans to improve their own teaching.

Planning groups respond to the difficulties of dealing with instructional issues not only by spending most of their time on noninstructional problems but also by treating instructional issues at the level of goals and objectives (usually expressed in terms of student outcomes). At this level, the issues can be stated in schoolwide terms. The planning group can avoid difficulties by sidestepping issues of what changes in teaching behavior are required to attain the goals and how these changes can be implemented.

In the few schools we visited in which agendas focused on changes in instructional practices in the classroom, such content was inevitably the result of leadership from a change agent, the principal, or another staff

member. The person exercising leadership had a vision of effective instructional practices* that applied across teachers and classrooms. The leader used the planning process as a vehicle for introducing teachers to his/her vision of effective instruction and elaborating this instructional agenda to fit the particulars of the school. (Later in this chapter, we discuss the roles played by the leader and the planning process in attaining instructional improvement.)

IMPLEMENTING THE AGENDA

Once a planning group has developed an agenda, the task of implementing it remains. We have analyzed the implementation process for different types of agendas in relation to two apparently important prerequisites: "ownership" and a sense of efficacy. The major premise of a school-based strategy is that teachers are more likely to implement changes when they have participated in their design; the planning process is intended to generate this sense of ownership. "Ownership" is usually thought to encompass the need for teachers to (1) have an opportunity to exercise influence (in this case, on the agenda), and (2) see the plans for change as consistent with their own beliefs (McLaughlin, 1978; Duke, 1982). Opportunities to exert influence and compatible beliefs are necessary but not at all sufficient to bring about change. Teachers must also know how to do things differently and believe they are capable of changing their behaviors in ways dictated by the agenda. (See Bandura, 1977, on self-efficacy.)

Noninstructional agendas are implemented with relative ease. For

*We thank Dan Duke for suggesting this phrase.

example, new discipline policies were the change most commonly cited as having resulted from the planning process in the schools we visited. The planning process provided an opportunity for teachers to influence the development of discipline policies, and all staff often shared beliefs about the nature of discipline problems and appropriate solutions. Moreover, planners could reach agreement on the operational details of noninstructional changes and specify how to implement the changes. Teachers knew they were to post rules in their classrooms, for example. Thus, it is not difficult to establish feelings of ownership and efficacy in the development of noninstructional agendas, and this leads to their implementation.

In contrast, instructional agendas are rarely implemented. Planning groups typically define instructional improvement in terms of goals and objectives by grade level and subject area. The planning process often succeeds in creating feelings of ownership; opportunities for influencing the agenda exist and, at the level of goals and objectives, beliefs are usually shared. But, as we described in Chapter 2, planning groups only rarely translate their goals into operational steps to be taken to bring about the desired improvements. Consequently, feelings of efficacy are unlikely to result. The groups' agendas draw attention to the outcomes of instruction but stop short of providing concrete guidance for actions teachers can take to improve students' academic performance. Without a clear sense of what is expected of them and how to act differently, teachers will not feel capable of implementing the agenda, even when they have influenced its development and share its assumptions.

Developing this sense of capability in a majority of teachers is no small task. It is not simply a matter of including a section in the

written plan that describes actions to be taken, although this is certainly a starting point. Many teachers, particularly those most in need of improvement, need role models and direct assistance in the classroom. Thus, it is hardly surprising that in those instances in which instructional changes were evident, we found an instructional leader who provided models and assistance. The leader not only had a clear sense of the specific actions that teachers needed to take to implement instructional changes but was able to provide assistance tailored to the needs of individual teachers.

Thus, we conclude that the planning process component of school-based programs is necessary but not sufficient to produce instructional improvement. It is necessary for the very reason envisaged by the program planners: teachers are more likely to implement changes whose design they have had the opportunity to influence. But it is insufficient because it lacks instructional content and implementation tactics. The planning process by itself also lacks the intellectual leadership necessary both for injecting content and for guiding the planning process in a way that meets the assumptions of school-based programs. As a result, planning groups tend to become preoccupied with noninstructional issues (demonstrating, incidentally, that the process does work in this domain), or they define instructional issues in terms of student outcomes rather than changes in curriculum and instruction.

A MODEL FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Our analysis points to the need for more than a planning process if instructional improvement is to result. There need to be mechanisms for injecting instructional content into the process and for assisting teachers

with implementing changes. In this section we propose a model for instructional improvement that fills in these missing pieces. Our model presents several conditions that maximize the likelihood of a planning process leading to instructional improvement. We have organized these conditions into three components: an instructional agenda, instructional leadership, and a process for changing behavior.

AN INSTRUCTIONAL AGENDA

Above we introduced the term "agenda" to connote the content of the planning process. In our model, a particular kind of agenda--an instructional agenda--is one of three necessary conditions for instructional improvement. We do not propose a specific agenda; instead we identify a set of characteristics of agendas that we found to be associated with subsequent instructional change. Four characteristics together define an instructional agenda: (1) it has an instructional core, (2) it is focused and prioritized, (3) it is action oriented, and (4) it is realistic with respect to available resources and time.

AN INSTRUCTIONAL CORE. An instructional agenda, by definition, must focus explicitly on issues concerning classroom instruction. Many other issues may demand attention (discipline, community relations, scheduling, etc.), but these concerns should not be the core of the agenda. To the extent that noninstructional changes are viewed as prerequisite to instructional changes, they should be included in the agenda in a way that makes explicit their connection to eventual instructional changes. Thus, for example, the need for a clear discipline policy or a longer reading period would be subordinate to plans for improving reading instruction to increase comprehension and would be tied directly to these plans. When

noninstructional issues are at the core of an agenda, they become ends in themselves and the next steps are lost.

FOCUSED AND PRIORITIZED. A common pitfall in the development of improvement plans is to try to cover everything--to do something new in every area or to address every problem identified. A planning group can generate an infinite number of ideas, many of which may be good, but which, taken together, require spreading energy and resources too thinly to be effective in any one area. Instructional changes are more likely to occur when the agenda concentrates on a few areas (see Purkey & Smith, 1983) and when the pieces fit together. Agendas that propose unrelated changes in many areas are likely to result in an array of uncoordinated, superficial changes that have little to do with teaching behavior. To be successful, an agenda needs to have goals and activities that are limited, prioritized, and connected.

ACTION ORIENTED. In addition to having an instructional focus with clear priorities, agendas must go beyond the usual statements of goals (e.g., desired student outcomes). The goals must be connected to specfic actions that teachers can take to insure that goals not attainable in the past can be reached. Spelling out the differences between these actions and current practices is also important. In addition, the agenda should incorporate some sort of implementation strategy; at the least, the agenda should identify the kind and amount of assistance teachers will need to implement the changes.

REALISTIC. For an agenda to be successfully implemented, it must be realistic about the amount of time the changes will take and the resources that are needed. Resources include the talents and skills of the school staff as well as financial resources. For example, plans to increase the

time available for instruction by eliminating recess periods take little in the way of time, staff capabilities, or funds. In contrast, plans to increase teachers' skill in questioning techniques may take several years to fully implement and may require considerable resources (e.g., for developing a schoolwide inservice program). An apparently simple agenda might reflect plans to implement a new reading series, but if staff are not familiar with the new series and consultant help is not available or affordable, the agenda is not realistic.

Another dimension of realism is flexibility. Schools are constantly affected by unpredictable changes in enrollment, faculty, district directives, state requirements, and so on. These influences are a fact of life in public education; agendas that ignore them will run into problems. Obviously, agendas cannot totally predict future circumstances. However, an agenda that assumes identical conditions over a three year period, ignores the school calendar, or is bound to a rigid time schedule will probably fail.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Our analysis suggests that planning groups are not likely to develop instructional agendas themselves. Where we observed instructional agendas, they were the result of leadership exercised by a person who brought to the planning group a vision of effective instruction and an implementation strategy. Therefore, the second component of our model is such an instructional leader--a person who can translate his or her vision of effective instruction into an appropriate and feasible agenda for the particular school. In addition to instructional expertise and a vision of effective instruction, the instructional leader must have (1) considerable

inside knowledge of the school, (2) credibility in the eyes of the school staff, and (3) strong interpersonal skills. This is a tall order.

The principal is generally thought to be the most likely candidate for instructional leader. Yet principals often lack instructional expertise and interpersonal skills. Other candidates include assistant principals and other middle managers (e.g., resource teachers and program coordinators) as well as classroom teachers. Staff other than the principal may have less credibility with the teachers although they may have more instructional expertise. Teachers, in particular, are rarely in a position to assume leadership over other teachers.

The other possible source for leadership is someone from outside the school, such as the liaisons in the NYC-SIP program. Because outside change agents do not initially have detailed inside knowledge of the school, they can fill the role of leader only if they can spend considerable time in the school. Whether the leader comes from inside or outside the school, the stronger his or her skills in the above domains, the more effective he or she will be in carrying out the activities described below (Louis, 1981; Fullan, 1982).

THE PROCESS OF CHANGING BEHAVIOR

This section discusses how an instructional leader can use the planning process to achieve the conditions that will lead to instructional improvement in the classroom. For teachers to change their behaviors, they must feel a sense of ownership of the agenda and a sense of efficacy. Teachers feel ownership when they have an opportunity to shape the agenda and the agenda is congruent with their beliefs. Teachers feel efficacious when they are clear about what they are being asked to do and they have the

skills to do it.

The concept of efficacy is closely related to teachers' expectations for their students. Teachers' beliefs that their students are incapable of learning are intimately tied to their beliefs about their own abilities to teach. Whether teachers attribute low achievement more to themselves or to the students, they are more likely to change their own behavior when they have clear goals and the skills to do things differently.

The planning process provides a vehicle ideally suited to establishing ownership and efficacy when an instructional leader is present. Given a vision of effective instruction, the leader's goal is to translate the preliminary agenda into an instructional agenda appropriate for the particular school in a way that establishes the feelings of ownership and efficacy.

BUILDING OWNERSHIP. The first step of the agenda-building process is a "needs assessment." This step can be used for two purposes: first, to learn more about the specifics of the school (including the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers) and second, to begin educating the planning group to see instructional problems in terms consistent with the preliminary agenda.

Whether the leader is a change agent or staff member, a needs assessment provides an opportunity to seek out the staff's and parents' perceptions and opinions and to gain insight into the school's culture, norms, and informal organization. To the extent that the leader can establish trust during the needs assessment, the process of soliciting information and opinions can contribute to teachers' feeling a stake in the process even if they are not members of the planning group.

Information gathered during a needs assessment is open to any number

of interpretations, but leaders can guide the interpretation of the assessment in two ways. First, they can structure the assessment in advance to fit their own preliminary agenda (gathering data in those areas which their vision of effective instruction dictates). For example, in NYC-SIP the needs assessment is structured around Edmonds' five "effective schools" factors. This structure, combined with the liaison's intensive work in gathering information through interviews with staff and in compiling the results, insures that the findings will point to the need for the very activities that the liaison has already envisaged. Second, even if the needs assessment is broad and not structured in advance by the leader's agenda, a skilled leader can extract from the data evidence that is compatible with his/her agenda.*

The next step in the process is translating the agenda into specific goals and actions appropriate to the particular school. This stage, like the needs assessment, should give teachers an opportunity to influence the agenda. Whether teachers take advantage of this opportunity is less important than their feeling that they had it (Duke, 1982). Members of the planning group have a direct opportunity to influence the agenda if their meetings are run in a way that seriously solicits their input. Whether teachers outside the planning group believe they can influence the agenda depends upon their feeling well represented on the group or their having access to another channel for input. If teachers do not feel adequately represented by their peers, the leader can solicit their input directly

* This description of the leader's role in the needs assessment may smack of heavy handed manipulation to some. Our response is that behavioral change does not occur spontaneously; it requires vision and leadership. Good leaders are those who can realize their visions without being perceived as manipulative--not without being manipulative in the sense of influencing the attitudes and behaviors of others.

(e.g., through the needs assessment) or through another mechanism (e.g., faculty meetings or a suggestion box).

BUILDING A SENSE OF EFFICACY. The planning process should also leave teachers feeling capable of implementing the actions specified in the agenda. If teachers have taken advantage of the opportunity to shape the agenda, they probably will have discussed the extent to which they feel able to implement the plans. In this case, the agenda may well include the specific actions expected of teacheres and the additional support, training, etc. that are needed. If this has not happened during the planning process, however, particular attention must be paid to the need for teachers to believe that improvement is within their grasp. This requires, first, that teachers believe that what they do has an impact on their students and, second, that they have concrete guidance, examples, and assistance in applying the agenda to their own classrooms.

The instructional leader can use a variety of approaches to establish these conditions. The agenda is a starting point. If the agenda is shared with all staff and communicates clear instructional goals (so that teachers "finally know what is expected of them"), action steps, and an implementation strategy (including any needed assistance), the likelihood that teachers will feel capable of changing is increased.* In addition, the leader can use a variety of methods for providing assistance. Visits to other schools, for example, give teachers the chance to see new

*There has been some success with direct attempts to change teachers' attitudes towards students in schools where low expectations is the norm. For example, in Milwaukee Maureen McCormack-Larkin developed a program designed specifically to raise teachers' expectations for students. Through a series of seminars, teachers were educated about the sources of their low expectations (e.g., how the media and their own training contribute to low expectations for poor and minority students) as well as the assumptions underlying different models designed to compensate for poor educational backgrounds.

approaches that have been successful in circumstances similar to their own. Other assistance techniques include helping groups of teachers work together to develop successful instructional strategies, working with individual teachers in the classroom, and so on. There is no one "best" form of assistance; the success of any combination of methods depends upon the strengths and weaknesses of the leader, the staff, and the school context.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM SPONSORS

Our findings indicate several ways in which program characteristics influence what happens in schools. Moreover, our model has implications for program design and support. In this chapter, we draw the implications for program planners and sponsors.

School-based programs can be sponsored by federal, state, or local education agencies. There are even examples of programs sponsored by advocacy groups or community groups. Obviously there are significant differences among types of sponsors. Because our purpose is to call attention to issues and illustrate connections between program design and school responses, we do not distinguish among sponsor types except where the differences have major implications.

We discuss issues of designing and supporting school-based improvement programs under four categories: school selection, resources, regulation, and accountability mechanisms.

SCHOOL SELECTION

Limited resources are a fact of life in public education, a fact that always argues for investing in efforts most likely to benefit from the investment. In school-based programs, under the assumption that only a subset of all schools will be included, the criteria for selection must combine school need and likelihood of success. In the previous chapter we concluded that the presence of an instructional leader is essential for instructional improvement. Clearly then, the likelihood for success is maximized by choosing schools that already have strong instructional leaders. Yet these are the very schools most likely to improve without any

outside intervention. On the other hand, choosing schools with serious instructional problems, little commitment to improvement, and no leadership maximizes the "need" criterion but lessens the probability of future success.

It is possible to strike a balance between these two criteria by selecting schools with a clear need for assistance in instructional improvement and with staff who demonstrate willingness to improve. Because instructional improvement is extremely difficult to accomplish, even in the best of circumstances, it makes more sense to invest in schools where the staff demonstrate some commitment to the idea of instructional improvement than in those where no such commitment exists. Therefore, at a minimum a school improvement effort should begin with a core of teachers willing to take it on. In fact, most school-based programs have tried to maximize the chance of success by selecting schools that provide some assurance that there is staff support for the improvement effort.*

Equally important is the principal's support for change and for the school-based model. A principal who is actively opposed to the notion of teacher involvement or disputes the need for instructional improvement or the need for outside assistance can undermine any improvement effort whether or not the other conditions are met.

Staff support can be gauged in several ways; the alternatives reflect trade-offs between accuracy of information and the expense of getting the information. Expense is minimized by selecting schools that volunteer, on the assumption that volunteering reflects staff support. However, this

* An alternative is to try to create such interest and commitment where it doesn't exist. This is extremely challenging and probably out of the question for a sponsoring agency removed more than one organizational level from the school.

assumption may be inaccurate if there are other incentives operating, such as the possibility of more money or political pressure (e.g., from the district). For example, if funding goes to schools whose staffs claim commitment to improvement on an application form, such claims are likely to be made whether commitment to change exists or not.

Cal-SIP, a state program, illustrates one approach to voluntary participation. In Cal-SIP, any public school can volunteer to participate; the only restriction is that at least half the participating schools in a district must be drawn from those scoring below the district median on achievement. In theory, a school is not to volunteer until it has formed a council of teachers, the principal, and parents who formally decide whether to apply for state funds. In practice, formation of the council usually occurs after the principal or the district has decided the school will participate (on grounds that may or may not reflect staff support).

As we saw in Chapter 2, the district often plays a strong role in determining which schools "volunteer"--a role that may or may not reflect the state's intent. How the district presents the opportunity to a school and the kind of support it offers can strongly influence whether or not a school volunteers. When school staff are involved in the decision, the main basis for their decision is often to weigh the anticipated new resources against the additional paperwork. Once the procedures for volunteering are followed on paper, there are no further checks on the willingness of the principal and staff to change what they are doing.

Without spending considerable time in a school talking with teachers and the principal, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which a group of teachers and the principal are willing to change. Yet such interviews are time consuming and costly. This approach is particularly difficult to

implement when the sponsoring agency is organizationally distant from the school (e.g., a state or federal agency). In NYC-SIP, a local program, central project staff interview school staff prior to selection to determine whether the principal is truly willing to open himself or herself and the school to close scrutiny and whether teachers are also willing (as opposed to having the program forced on them by the principal). Even so, the project dropped some schools in which liaisons found that the necessary openness to scrutiny and support for change did not materialize.

Alternatively, one can imagine an approach in which continued participation is based on the results of the school's needs assessment or written plan (see the discussion of regulation, below). Schools that identify instructional issues and develop realistic, instruction-oriented plans continue in the program. The questions about this approach are how such decisions are made and by whom. Federal and state agencies, for example, can request such information from schools, but they do not necessarily have the staff or the other sources of information to make sound judgments. Alternatively, district agencies, with staff in a position to know more about the individual schools, may be subject to more immediate political pressures in selecting schools (a situation that also holds if federal or state agencies delegate this responsibility to the district).

The main risk associated with verifying the desire for improvement is that those schools with the most desperate need for improvement will be eliminated by this process. The extent to which this concern should influence choices about school selection must ultimately rest on factors such as the amount of resources available, the competition for them, and the availability of other sources of support for improvement in those

schools. Ultimately, the best selection mechanism is one in which sound human judgments are made on the basis of as much first-hand information as possible about the school's need and willingness to change.

RESOURCES

The fact that instructionally effective schools exist without extra infusions of money does not mean that changing an ineffective school into an effective one is possible without resources (Cuban, 1983). All the programs we studied provided substantial resources in one form or another. NYC-SIP provides full-time change agents who are experienced educators; in addition the project reimburses teachers for participating in the planning group. Cal-SIP provides funds directly to schools. Schoolwide Projects schools received state or local matching funds in addition to their federal Title I (now Chapter 1) grants.

Although schools do not necessarily require vast infusions of funds to implement instructional improvements, they do require resources to approximate the model described in the preceding chapter. It is hard to imagine a school that does not need some sort of assistance in developing the kind of leadership and planning that our model calls for. The resources from an outside agency can take the form of assistance (a change agent who provides instructional leadership or leadership training for selected staff members) or money (to purchase assistance, materials, time for teachers to plan, etc.). Either is expensive because the assistance is best provided in person by someone who is familiar with the particulars of the school and able to spend considerable time working there. Logistical considerations make it extremely difficult for federal or state governments to provide this kind of assistance directly. They simply do not have the

staff. Even regional offices are unlikely to have enough qualified staff to provide this type of assistance on more than a demonstration basis.

At the federal level, some models exist for delivering assistance in person. These include the National Diffusion Network and other dissemination efforts that use change agents, although these approaches typically focus on spreading existing projects rather than encouraging school-based development of projects. Another model is the Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) set up to provide assistance to local staff in evaluating their ESEA Title I (now ECIA Chapter 1) projects. These centers, which are independent contractors to the federal government, are staffed with professionals who share their expertise with local staff through regional and local workshops, visits, and materials. Although a far cry from a full-time on-site change agent, these types of services are more appropriate to the assistance needed for school-based change than the usual booklets and guidelines issued by funding agencies.

In general, the farther the funding agency from the school, the more difficult the provision of technical assistance. For this reason, assistance focused on developing leadership and organizational skills among school staff might be a more promising strategy than assistance that must be provided by exceptionally talented individuals, particularly if the program sponsor is at the state or federal level. Districts are more likely to have a pool of administrators with classroom experience who can, as individuals or teams, provide direct assistance to schools.

If financial resources are to be provided directly to schools, decisions must be made about the amount of money and the funding mechanism. Funds can be provided through some type of formula grant as in Cal-SIP, in which a school receives a grant based on the number and grade level of its

students. Alternatively, although we did not observe such a model, funds could be tied to the plan itself; under this hypothetical model, participating schools might receive different amounts depending upon the changes proposed in their plan. The weakness of this approach is the likelihood that plan writing would be driven by the anticipated funds. Another hypothetical model, which extends the logic of the Schoolwide Projects of Title I, is to allocate funds based on the number or proportion of disadvantaged students (which could be defined to include low-income, limited English speaking, and handicapped).

The main message is that instructional improvement isn't free. To approximate the model presented in the preceding chapter, schools need help, and help costs money. Program sponsors planning to launch a school-based program with limited resources are urged to consider selection criteria that limit the number of participating schools rather than spreading resources too thinly to benefit any of the schools.

Furthermore, the school selection criteria used could determine the type of resources provided. Sponsors who emphasize the need for improvement will probably find it appropriate to provide schools with assistance (assuming that skilled change agents are available to work in the schools). On the other hand, sponsors who try to maximize the likelihood of success by selecting schools with strong internal leadership may find it more appropriate to provide the schools with funds for planning and implementing instructional improvements.

REGULATION

Whether a school-based program is launched by local, state or federal governments, the question of how much to regulate arises. Because the

underlying premise of the school-based strategy is to cede discretion to school staff, the notion of regulation on its face runs counter to the approach. Yet any government agency wants some assurance that its resources are being used appropriately. Moreover, procedural requirements have been demonstrated to be a powerful tool in shaping behavior in desired ways (Stearns, David, & Greene, 1980; Knapp, Stearns, Turnbull, David, & Peterson, 1983).

In theory, a government agency can regulate every step of a school-based planning process as well as the product. It can require that a planning group be formed, that the members be selected in a particular way, and that the written plan have a specified format and content. Each of these requirements can be general (e.g., the planning group must consist of teachers and a representative of the school administration) or highly specific (the planning group must consist of one teacher from each grade, the principal, and six representatives chosen by the community).

If the process is specified in detail, the risk is that all the energy of school staff will go into meeting the procedural requirements. To the extent that the process is driven by a set of rules, the likelihood that it will be "owned" by the staff is greatly diminished.

The extent to which regulations affect behavior is also a function of the way in which they are monitored and the sanctions for noncompliance. Staff generally put considerable effort into that which is most readily monitored (Stearns, David, & Greene, 1980), particularly where monitoring is accompanied by the threat (real or perceived) of discontinued funding. Since it is harder to monitor the quality of a planning process than to inspect forms and documents, the combination of specific requirements, monitoring, and the associated fear of sanctions is likely to divert

attention away from meaningful planning towards superficial procedures and paperwork that demonstrate compliance. We found several clear examples of this preoccupation with compliance and accountability among the schools we visited.

Decisions about the "appropriate" amount and type of regulation must also take into account other regulations under which participating schools are operating. For example, an original intent of Cal-SIP's architects was that the program serve a coordinating function for all school programs--an "umbrella" program. This has proved unrealistic, however, because of the existence of other program regulations which cannot be altered by Cal-SIP.

The main point is that a balance must be sought between requiring certain procedures (thereby communicating the intent and seriousness of the program) and including many specific requirements (which detract from the intent and pose within-school coordination problems). Below we discuss some of the trade-offs program sponsors should consider in prescribing (1) the formation, composition, and authority of the planning group; (2) the structure and content of the written plan; and (3) how funds are to be spent.

PLANNING GROUP REQUIREMENTS

Program sponsors can choose whether or not to require a school to form a planning group, whether to prescribe its composition and a process for selecting members, and how much authority to invest in the group.

If a planning group is not required, the risk is that such a group will not be formed. Schools already have decision making structures, such as a principal who makes all the decisions, a small group of advisors to the principal, or some participatory mechanism. Schools with Title I

Schoolwide Projects, which were not required to form special decision-making groups, did not do so. Decisions about Title I had already been made by the district, school Title I staff, and the principal. An approval mechanism for parents was already in place through the required Title I parent avisory group. The vague requirement in the law for comprehensive planning did not result in the formation of a planning group.

One argument against requiring a planning group is that such a group would compete with another already existing decision-making process that could be used. To avoid this situation, a planning group might be required with allowances for schools to propose alternative mechanisms which could be approved on an individual basis. The farther the funding agency from the school, the more unwieldy this approach would be.

Assuming that a planning group is required, the next choice facing program sponsors is whether to prescribe its membership and the method for selecting members. The main considerations here are which constituencies to include and how to insure that they are well represented. One approach is to leave the decisions about composition entirely up to the school, letting community pressure, relationships between teachers and administrators, and other school site conditions determine what is appropriate. This approach risks the establishment of a group for primarily political reasons. Although often described as constraining, regulations have the advantage of providing school staff with a rationale for doing things a certain way.

We assume that the planning group should, at a minimum, include teachers who adequately represent the school staff. Should the group also contain community members or parents? The advantage is to gain community support. The disadvantage is our finding that groups with parent members

are not used for the intended purpose of identifying problems and devising solutions, particularly when the issues concern instruction. When parents are present, teachers and administrators present a united front and use the group as a way of keeping parents informed. This is certainly an important function, but one which may ultimately undermine the instructional planning that school-based efforts are intended to foster. Having a planning group without parents need not preclude establishing a second group to inform parents and solicit their input and reactions to plans.

It is difficult to imagine a mechanism that would insure that each constituency is well represented on the planning group. Requiring elections, we speculate, is as likely as not to result in a time-consuming arrangement that no more insures representativeness than self-selection does. Such procedures may also clash with other rules such as those established through collective bargaining, particularly if funds for staff planning time are involved.

On the other hand, program planners will want to minimize the likelihood that principals will hand pick planning groups for their docility and other traits not conducive to a meaningful planning process. Also, our general sense from the findings is that staff are more likely to feel well represented when planning group members represent specific constituencies rather than serve at large.

WRITTEN PLAN REQUIREMENTS

We have argued that school-based planning is more likely to result in instructional improvement when the plans have instructional issues as the core and have focused and prioritized goals, steps for achieving the goals, and realistic expectations. With this in mind, the following discussion

presumes that the primary goal of requirements for written plans should be to encourage the development of such an instructional focus (see Chapter 3).

The first decision for program planners is whether or not to require any type of written plan. We have seen numerous instances in which tremendous effort is expended in creating a written plan, but it is a plan that has no connection to anything else--an end in itself. This characterization is particularly true of programs that emphasize comprehensiveness in planning and that monitor the plans to be sure that all required components are included. This experience led us initially to conclude that written plans should be abandoned; that they distract from serious planning rather than encouraging it. Yet a plan serves other important functions.

First, it provides a structured activity for the planning group. Having to produce an end product can help structure discussions that would otherwise go nowhere. It also forces planners to specify what they are trying to do in a way that can later be referred to. Moreover, requiring a plan implicitly attributes importance to the plan itself; a plan would almost certainly not be written if it were not required.

Given that a plan is required, the next decision for program sponsors is what the nature of the requirements should be. Funding agencies can specify both the format and the content of the plans, either in general or very specific terms. In our sample, the requirements ranged from the vague mandate of Title I that comprehensive plans be developed to the prescriptions of Cal-SIP, which requires that one of four formats be followed and that the plan deal with each of seven content areas over a three-year period, and NYC-SIP, which requires that the plan address each

of Edmonds' five factors.

It is important to recognize that requirements for plans are not received in a vacuum. Schools are accustomed to filling out application forms for various programs, evaluation reports, plans required by their districts, and so on. And they are accustomed in these contexts to fulfilling reporting obligations, not to thinking of such paperwork as being connected to what they do. These experiences influence the ways that school staff interpret new requirements. For example, in Title I Schoolwide Projects schools, it is not surprising that the "comprehensive plans" were identical to previous years' application forms. The vague requirement did not signal a new way of thinking about improvement.

If requirements for written plans are highly specific, there are different risks. One is that the prescription will be viewed as the imposition of an agenda from the funding agency and will go the way of most top-down curricular reforms. A second risk is that cited above--that all the effort will go into meeting the specific requirements and not into serious planning ("How are we supposed to fill out this part?"). This is particularly likely when behavioral objectives are required--an exercise which is like formula writing for many school staff at this point. Requiring that plans be comprehensive is also likely to encourage a pro forma response since it is impossible to develop sound plans that cover all aspects of the educational program.

On the other hand, program planners may well view the written plans as their main means for accountability--both as a demonstration that planning has occurred and as a document against which to compare what is implemented. Program planners need to decide whether the plan is required primarily as an accountability device or as a way of encouraging the

development of sound instructional agendas. If the primary goal is accountability, specificity of requirements is perhaps desirable but risks losing the second goal entirely. If the primary goal is to encourage instructional agendas, less specificity is desirable, provided that there is a clear message about what is expected.

In general, we suspect that short plans are preferable to long ones. If all teachers are to read and use the plan, it cannot be fifty pages long with hundreds of behavioral objectives. It will be more likely to be useful if it contains a few primary goals and summary statements of the steps to be taken to achieve the goals. The aim should be to have a short plan that communicates a focused approach to improvement and the specific steps to be implemented. One approach is that used by NYC-SIP in which Edmonds' five "effective schools" factors are used to structure the plan. The growing effective schools literature (see Purkey & Smith, 1983) provides a source for several lists of factors which can communicate the important areas for change without constraining how the plans are written.

RESTRICTIONS ON FUNDS

The last area in which program sponsors typically consider regulation is how funds are expended. For programs that do not fund schools directly (but provide assistance via change agents, for example), this is not an issue. When funds are provided directly to schools, program sponsors must decide how much to restrict their use. Funds could be earmarked specifically for purchasing technical assistance, for staff development, for materials, or for freeing teachers for planning time (e.g., hiring a staff member or substitute teachers or paying teachers for after school time). Since it is unlikely that all participating schools will have the

same needs, it is probably inadvisable to narrowly restrict expenditures.

On the other hand, especially if total resources are shrinking, program sponsors may want to insure that funds do not merely replace a recently lost counselor or clerical assistant to the principal. This necessitates some type of restriction, if no more than a list of categories of expenditures that are not acceptable.

Across all types of educational programs, heavy-handed regulation is called for when little congruence is expected between school goals and program goals. In school-based programs, particularly if selection procedures assess school staff willingness to improve, there should be considerable congruence. Therefore the primary purpose of the regulations should be to communicate what is expected and what is valued--the goals for the program. This suggests requiring certain general mechanisms without mandating specific procedures for establishing and using them. For example, requirements (1) that there be a planning group, (2) that teachers be represented, (3) that there be a written plan, and (4) that the plan focus on instructional issues form the backbone of school-based approaches without being overly restrictive.

ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Mechanisms for holding schools accountable for complying with regulations should follow the same logic that applies to regulation. In principle, their purpose should be to insure that school staff have made their best efforts in developing and implementing plans for instructional improvement. Accountability in the traditional sense of requiring schools to demonstrate that they have complied with all requirements is antithetical to the whole notion of creating school-based improvement

plans. An alternative approach would be to provide incentives that encourage meaningful planning, help schools assess where they are, and identify needs for assistance.

The programs we observed had quite different conceptions of accountability. The New York programs did not need any formal accountability because program staff (the liaisons and consultants) were in the schools and could judge and influence the extent to which the requirements were being implemented and goals met. The Florida schools were required to develop reports on their activities. This arrangement produced examples of the drawback of reliance on written documents: in one school that received a state award for the quality of its report, we learned that the teachers had had nothing to do with preparing the report and felt that it did not reflect the school accurately; it had been prepared single-handedly by the principal.

At the other extreme, the Cal-SIP schools are visited by a team of state (or state-trained) reviewers who spend several days in a school judging the "quality" of its program. The visit was viewed by most schools as a major event for which considerable time was spent rehearsing. The drawbacks were (1) the time spent preparing for the visit, and (2) the staff's perception that they were being judged on the basis of compliance--whether they had done what the plan said. The latter perception may have partly stemmed from the fact that the review included many state and federal categorical programs that were checked for compliance. In some schools staff believed that they could not do anything that wasn't written in the plan and that the process for revising the plan was too cumbersome to add new ideas or improve old ones.

Another approach--one which we did not enounter but which is often

proposed--is to hold schools accountable for raising test scores. In principle, this is certainly defensible (if achievement hasn't improved, something is wrong) but in practice there are two whopping problems. One is the omnipresent testing issue--on what test is it fair to judge schools (or teachers)? What is the standard for comparison? The other problem is how to define success. Surprisingly, neither the effective schools research nor school-based programs grapple with the issue of distributional effects--understandably, because these raise sensitive questions of values. Should success mean that scores increase across the entire distribution? And, if so, for all grades several years in a row? Suppose the mean increases but, upon inspection, reflects an increase in scores for only the very top or very bottom students? There are no answers to these questions, but they carry two important messages. One is that concern should be communicated for students at the bottom of the distribution, who are already more likely to be overlooked. Instructional improvement directed only at the top students is a perversion of the concept of school-based improvement. The second is that if test scores are used to measure success, attention should be paid to the distribution of scores. Simply reporting a mean communicates little about what has happened in a school.

We do not conclude that one particular accountability mechanism is most appropriate for school-based programs. However, traditional models that judge strict compliance with specific rules are definitely inappropriate. Accountability, like regulation, should be conceived of in the same terms as the program's philosophy--as a way of communicating the intent of the program, emphasizing goals of instructional improvement, and insuring that appropriate assistance is available.

5. THE PROMISE OF SCHOOL-BASED REFORM

We undertook this study to assess the promise of school-based programs for improving instruction, especially in low-income schools. School-based reform has considerable intuitive appeal. As in the world of business and industry (see O'Toole, 1981), evidence and common sense support the value of dealing with organizational units of manageable size, having a mechanism for staff input into decisions, and developing shared goals and directions.

School-based approaches have some distinct advantages, in principle, over previous reform efforts. Rather than compelling a particular program structure (e.g., pull-out classes for remediation) or content (e.g., the new math) or technique (e.g., direct instruction), school-based programs leave these choices up to the school. School-based programs also have some potential disadvantages, especially in contrast to programs with specific protections for disadvantaged students (e.g., federal and state categorical programs). The main risk is that, left to their own, schools will choose to ignore those students most in need of extra assistance.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The immediate, specific goal of school-based reform is to establish a process involving school staff in continuous planning and review. We found that school staff are able to establish such a process; they do form planning groups which meet regularly and produce written plans. Yet our major finding is that this process does not necessarily lead to improved instruction. Two more ingredients are necessary to achieve instructional improvement: instructional content and support for change. Without a focus on instruction and support for implementing change, planning is

likely to be an empty (and time consuming) process unconnected to classroom instruction.

Three classes of conditions greatly increase the likelihood that school-based planning will affect teachers' behaviors and result in instructional improvement: 1) preconditions for any kind of change; 2) instructional leadership within the school; and 3) conditions outside the school created by the district (or state or federal government).

The following two preconditions for change are essential: First, there must be a core of teachers favorably disposed towards change. Second, the principal must support change and teacher involvement (or at least not be opposed to it). To turn around the attitudes of an entire faculty or to buck the principal every step of the way is too much to ask of any reform effort--especially one that relies on the initiative of those involved.

Instructional leadership is a key ingredient within the school. Our model (Chapter 3) elaborates what leadership means in the context of school-based reform. An instructional leader is someone (not necessarily the principal) who has a vision of effective instruction and who pays explicit attention to the need to develop: (a) a realistic agenda focused on specific instructional concerns and (b) a planning and review process which engenders staff feelings of ownership and efficacy.

The agenda is derived from the leader's vision of effective instruction and elaborated in the context of the particulars of the school. The leader uses the planning process to involve staff in elaborating the agenda, determining the specific actions to be taken, and identifying the assistance needed by the staff to implement the changes. Through this process, a skillful leader can develop teachers' sense of ownership and

efficacy.

To create and sustain the conditions described above, schools need support from the outside. Resources are critical, especially in the form of in-person assistance for developing leadership in the school (either with existing school staff or through a change agent). Resources in the form of money or supplies may or may not be essential depending upon the particular school and district.

District support plays a role analogous to support from the principal. If the district isn't enthusiastic about school-based reform, district staff must at least stay out of the way. Active support includes incentives for improvement, relief from rules and demands that severely constrain what the school can do, and allowance for success and failure on several dimensions. Instructional improvement is not fostered by asking schools to plan their own reforms while simultaneously requiring them to administer frequent district and state tests which are tied to a particular curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS

These findings lead us to several central conclusions:

- The principles underlying school-based programs are sound. Treating the school as an organizational entity and developing a process for ongoing planning and review with staff involvement should be part of any school reform strategy. If the planning process is the only forum for improving instruction, however, it will not succeed without instructional leadership and content.

- The creation of meaningful school-based planning and change is difficult. It is a complex, time-consuming process asked of people who are already overworked, undertrained and underpaid. Although we have identified conditions associated with successful instructional

improvement, establishing these conditions is undeniably challenging.

- The fact that schools can form planning groups and successfully change noninstructional aspects of the school provides considerable hope for the eventual transfer into instructional areas. Current school-based approaches are not counterproductive: they are moving in the right direction.

- We found little evidence to support the fear that students most in need will be overlooked in school-based programs. However, the schools in our sample have comparatively high concentrations of disadvantaged students. We cannot judge the risk that these students will be neglected in schools where they are in the minority. However, we believe that more serious risks lie at the district level. Disadvantaged schools typically require more resources (especially in-person assistance) than their more advantaged counterparts. Under a school-based approach, equal opportunity can be enhanced or thwarted by the way in which schools are selected and the resources distributed.

- The kinds of knowledge, skills and actions we characterize as the essence of instructional leadership can be used in two important ways. First, they can serve as criteria for identifying and training local staff as change agents. The second is to develop and expand preservice training programs for principals and teachers based on these findings. The growing need for educators to adapt to a rapidly changing world argues for preparing future teachers and administrators to be agents of change themselves.

We began this report noting the tremendous challenges facing public schools in the 1980's. Schools are exhorted to change to meet the new demands of the "Information Age." But significant change requires more than yet another set of materials, a new testing program or even a room full of computers. There are no magic solutions or short cuts. Instructional improvement is hard to do and it takes time; expectations for any improvement strategy must take this into account.

The real promise of school-based reform lies in its potential to help school staff adapt to changing circumstances. To the extent that school-based programs continue to move in the direction of fostering ongoing attention to instructional improvement and providing support and assistance to teachers, their promise can be realized.

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. Social learning theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977.

Berman, P. Toward an implementation paradigm. In R. Lehming & M. Kane (Eds.), Improving schools. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981.

Berman, P., & Gjelten, T., with Izu, J. A. Improving school improvement. A policy evaluation of the California School Improvement Program. Seminar II. Improvement, maintenance and decline: A progress report. Berkeley, CA: Berman, Weiler Associates, 1982.

Berman, P., & McLaughlin, M. W. Federal programs supporting educational change, Vol. VII: Factors affecting implementation and continuation. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1978.

Berman, P., Weiler, D., Czesak, K., Gjelten, T., & Izu, J. A. Improving school improvement. A policy evaluation of the California School Improvement Program. Seminar I. How schools view and use the School Improvement Program: Preliminary hypotheses. Berkeley, CA: Manifest International, 1981.

Brookover, W., Beady, C., Flood, P., Schweitzer, J., & Wisenbaker, J. School social systems and student achievement: Schools can make a difference. New York: Praeger, 1979.

Clark, T. A., & McCarthy, D. P. School improvement in New York City: The evolution of a project. Educational Researcher, 1983, 12 (4), 17-24.

Cuban, L. Transforming the frog into the prince: Effective schools research, policy, and practice at the district level. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1983.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Wise, A. A conceptual framework for examining teachers' views of teaching and educational policies. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1981.

Duke, D. L. What can principals do? Leadership functions and instructional effectiveness. NASSP Bulletin, October 1982, 1-12.

Duke, D. L., Showers, B. K., & Imber, M. Teachers as school decision makers. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Institute for Research on Educational Finance, 1980.

Edmonds, R. R. Effective schools for the urban poor. Educational Leadership, 1979, 36, 15-27.

Emrick, J. A., & Peterson, S. M. A synthesis of findings across five recent studies in educational dissemination and change. San Francisco, CA: Far West Laboratory, 1978.

Farrar, E., DeSanctis, J. E., & Cohen, D. K. Views from below: Implementation research in education. Teachers College Record, 1980, 82 (1), 77-100.

Fullan, M. The meaning of educational change. New York: Teachers College Press, 1982.

Fullan, M., & Pomfret, A. Research on curriculum and instruction implementation. Review of Educational Research, 1977, 47 (1), 335-97.

Glenn, B. C. What works? An examination of effective schools for poor black children. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Center for Law and Education, 1981.

Greene, D., & David, J. L. A research design for generalizing from multiple case studies. Evaluation and Program Planning, 1984, 7, 73-84.

Kimbrough, J., & Hill, P. The aggregate effects of federal education programs. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1981.

Knapp, M. S., Stearns, M. S., Turnbull, B. J., David, J. L., & Peterson, S. M. Cumulative effects of federal education policies on schools and districts. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, 1983.

Lortie, D. C. Schoolteacher: A sociological study. Chicago: Univesity of Chicago Press, 1975.

Louis, K. S. External agents and knowledge utilization: Dimensions for analysis and action. In R. Lehming & M. Kane (Eds.), Improving schools. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981.

McCormack-Larkin, M., & Kritek, W. J. Milwaukee's project RISE. Educational Leadership, 1982, 40 (3), 16-21.

McLaughlin, M. W. Implementation as mutual adaptation: Changes in classroom organization. In D. Mann (Ed.), Making change happen. New York: Teachers College Press, 1978.

McLaughlin, M. W., & Marsh, D. Staff development and school change. In D. Mann (Ed.), Making change happen. New York: Teachers College Press, 1978.

Miles, M. B. Mapping the common properties of schools. In R. Lehming & M. Kane (Eds.), Improving schools. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981.

National Institute of Education (NIE). The compensatory education study. Washington, D.C.: author, 1978.

O'Toole, J. Making America work. New York: Continuum, 1981.

Pincus, J. Incentives for innovation in the public schools. Review of Educational Research, 1974, 44, 113-44.

Popkewitz, T. S., Tabachnick, B. R., & Wehlage, G. G. The myth of educational reform. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

Purkey, S. C., & Smith, M. S. Effective schools: A review. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Center for Education Research, 1982.

Rubin, D. P., & David, J. L. The schoolwide projects provision of ESEA Title I: An analysis of the first year of implementation. Palo Alto, CA: Bay Area Research Group, 1981.

Stearns, M. S., Greene, D., & David, J. L. Local implementation of PL 94-142: First-year report of a longitudinal study. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, 1980.

Weatherley, R., & Lipsky, M. Street-level bureaucrats and institutional innovation: Implementing special education reform. In D. Mann (Ed.), Making change happen. New York: Teachers College Press, 1978.

Weick, K. E. Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. Administrative Science Quarterly, 1976, 21, 1-19.

Williams, W. The implementation perspective. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980.